

**Learning about student success from students'
stories: A narrative study of successful business
degree students at a New Zealand university**

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Abstract

Learning about student success from students' stories: A narrative study of successful business degree students at a New Zealand university

The purpose of this study was to better understand how students' prior experiences and contexts contributed to their success in an undergraduate business degree in a New Zealand University.

The study used a narrative approach underpinned by hermeneutics. I undertook semi-structured interviews with ten students about their family background and educational history, followed by a two-stage analysis process. Firstly the data were developed into stories and then the data were re-analysed using a Bourdieusian lens. Three different developments by scholars of Bourdieu's thinking tools, namely the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories, were combined to provide the theoretical framework to analyse the data.

The findings revealed diverse backgrounds and experiences of the student participants but all had a positive fit with the university environment, and possessed attitudes and behaviours consistent with possessing the habitus of an educated person. While the narratives did not disclose significant parental involvement in the students' education, they did disclose emotional support by parents, reinforcing the value the parents placed on education. The study also revealed differing journeys in the development of academic confidence, with experiences of success in education fostering academic confidence to varying degrees.

The study makes a contribution to our knowledge about student success through extending the concept of educated habitus to higher education as an

explanation for success, and using a combination of the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and trajectory interruption as a means to explore how the students developed that educated habitus. The application of those concepts in the New Zealand higher education context, where Bourdieu's thinking tools have seldom been used, resulted in some nuances to be added to these concepts including that the study showed that cultural and peer attitudes can trigger habitus tug, and that the devastation of failure appeared to be less about being a non-traditional student and more related to fragile levels of academic confidence.

The implications for practice in supporting students in the business degree include recognition of the individuality of students' lives and the role experiences outside university have to play in success, suggesting holistic rather than only academically-focused support for students is desirable, along with encouragement for students to specifically address their concept of success and how to achieve it. A further area for study is analysis of the experiences and context of students who are not successful.

Keywords: narrative analysis, hermeneutics, student success, educated habitus, interrupted trajectories, habitus tug

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to better understand why students succeed at one university which is committed to widening participation. Participation in higher education in developed countries has increased in the past 70 years from education for the elite ruling classes to mass higher education, preparing up to 50% of the population for technical and professional roles (Trow, 2006). This has occurred as governments have recognised the importance of knowledge in the economy and have taken an active role in higher education (McCaffery, 2010).

There is not an agreed definition of widening participation in higher education (Burke, 2017). The Higher Education Funding Council for England has said that it is a broad expression that covers various aspects including fair access to higher education and social mobility (Higher Education Funding Council for England, n.d.) and the Office for Fair Access in England defines it as “removing the barriers to higher education, including financial barriers, that students from lower income and other under-represented backgrounds face” (Office for Fair Access, n.d., Glossary). These definitions represent an approach based in fairness, where the aim is to seek more socially representative participation in higher education, rather than access where the aim is to increase the number of people who participate in higher education (Marginson, 2011).

In New Zealand, where this study was situated, the term “widening participation” is not often used, but the concept has been part of the Government’s agenda for a number of years (Leach, 2016). New Zealand Government’s widening participation policies have been promulgated through a succession of Tertiary Education Strategies which address both university and polytechnic education (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2002, 2007, 2010).

These strategies have consistently referred to the economic benefits of increased participation in higher education, through increased productivity. The most recent Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014) also referred to social and environmental outcomes.

In an environment of widening participation, research about student success and retention has been of interest (Tight, 2003). Tight suggests this is because institutions and funders would like to be able to predict with accuracy which students are worth investing in (Tight, 2003). This has become even more important as the cost of providing higher education to more people has become troublesome (Keller, 2007) and, aligned with this, funding policies increasingly measure the performance of institutions based on student retention and success measures, as part of a move for more accountability of universities (McCaffery, 2010).

As well as a focus on identifying who is worthy of investment, research into student success is important in identifying the extent to which higher education outcomes reflect an approach to widening participation based in equity. An Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development report defined equity in higher education as systems that ensure participation is based on innate individual ability and effort rather than personal and social circumstances (Santiago, Trembley & Arnal 2008). The authors noted that there was a difference between equity of access to higher education and equity of outcomes. They also noted that equity in higher education is affected by inequities at lower levels of the education system and the background of the student, and that, while education can provide an opportunity to overcome social disadvantage, it can also reinforce inequalities and not necessarily result in social mobility (Santiago et al., 2008). This caution echoes the arguments put forward by Pierre Bourdieu, a French anthropologist and sociologist, who argued that, rather than promoting social mobility, education assisted in the reproduction of social inequality by maintaining the dominant group's success in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). My role at the University where I am employed (which will be referred to as City University in

order to protect the anonymity of the participants in the study) is one in which I can contribute to advancing equity in higher education through supporting students' success. City University has positioned itself as supporting wider participation in higher education ([City University], 2016) and, consistent with New Zealand Government strategy (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014), it has a focus on success in higher education for Maori and Pacific students, who are under-represented groups in higher education ([City University], 2016).

1.2 Position of the researcher

My role at the time I began this study was Director of Business Undergraduate Programmes and the principal programme for which I was responsible was the Bachelor of Business which is an undergraduate Business degree ("the Business degree"). This is what might be known elsewhere as a commerce degree, and one where students can choose to specialise in one or two of 11 major subjects such as accounting, finance, management, etc. I chose to focus this study on the Business degree because as a practitioner researcher I would be able to influence change. Although my role has recently changed to Associate Dean Academic for the Faculty in which the Business degree sits, it remains the case that I can influence change in the Business degree, because I am now responsible for overseeing all Business and Law programmes in the Faculty, including the Business degree.

In New Zealand primary schools teach students from years 1-6, intermediate schools years cover years 7-8 and secondary schools/colleges cover years 9-13 (although some colleges cover years 7-13). Students are able to go to university if they attain University Entrance either through gaining the required number of credits in year 13 in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement ("NCEA"), which is the route taken by the majority of students, or through gaining the required pass levels in years 12 or 13 in either the Cambridge International Examinations ("Cambridge") or the International Baccalaureate (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.), or if they have

attained the age of 20 years. Universities are allowed to add additional selection criteria to these requirements. The Business degree supports widening participation in that, unlike a number of business degrees at other universities in New Zealand, it does not have additional selection criteria. The effect of this is that students who are unable to gain entry to other business degrees are able to enrol in City University's Business degree. This creates some challenges because the range of preparedness for university study varies amongst the student group.

This study arose out of my growing understanding, through my reading on the EdD programme, of the complexities of widening participation in higher education. In particular, through being exposed to some of the literature that built on the work of Bourdieu (for example, Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a) and other discussions about widening participation (for example, Rizvi & Lingard, 2011; Watts, 2008) my assumption that widening participation was achieving social mobility was challenged. I became interested in exploring how my own work was contributing to social mobility and, given that my institution has a significant proportion of non-traditional students, I was interested in exploring how concepts based on Bourdieu's thinking tools might apply in that context.

I see supporting student success in the Business degree as a contribution I can make to advancing equity in higher education, which is an approach with which I align as being something that should contribute to social mobility and the potential reduction of inequality. As a practitioner researcher my aim was to undertake useful research that had value and could result in changes that could be implemented (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007). Fox et al (2007) suggest that there are four phases of change: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome. Moving change towards the implementation phase requires an understanding of need and complexity, and requires clarity and practicality (Fox et al., 2007). This study was situated in the initiation phase. In order to make decisions about how to better support student success in the Business degree, it was first necessary to better understand who our students are and what contributes to student success for Business degree students at City University.

1.3 Context of the research

New Zealand's policy of widening participation in higher education is ethnically rather than socio-economically based (Boumelha, 2012; Leach, 2016) in that it prioritises the success of Maori and Pacific students. The prioritisation of Maori student success is a reflection of the Government's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi – the founding constitutional document of New Zealand which was signed by Maori as the indigenous people of New Zealand, and the Crown in 1840. Bi-culturalism has been recognised both in case law and through Government statements which confirm that Government and Maori are partners and that the Government has a duty to protect Maori interests and remedy past breaches (Hayward, 2012). The Government's responsibilities to Maori as the Tangata Whenua (people of the land) and Treaty partners are acknowledged in the Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014). The prioritisation of success for Pacific students reflects a Government goal to create strong Pacific communities that will contribute to building a productive economy (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014). The Pacific population is fast growing but is currently under-represented in higher education (Tertiary Education Commission, 2017).

The current Government strategy is an amalgam of access and fairness – fairness in the sense that success for Maori and Pacific people is measured by the percentage of those groups achieving qualifications (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014), and access in the sense that, for the remainder (non-Maori and non-Pacific students) who are at risk of not gaining a qualification, success is measured by a reduction in the number of young people not in training or employment (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014).

While the current strategy has some reference to increased participation in higher education (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014), Leach (2016) argued that it is focused on

achievement in terms of completion of qualifications, rather than participation. The change to a focus on achievement came at a time of economic downturn (Strathdee, 2011) when changes as part of the 2010 Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2010) included a portion of institutions' funding being based on retention, completion and qualification completion within a set period of time (Leach, 2016), with a portion of the funding at risk if targets were not met (Strathdee, 2011). Student numbers were capped, and more money was put towards degree-level study at the expense of lower-level study. Strathdee (2011) argued that this risked increased elitism in terms of access to university because it could limit progression to university for students who did not have the resources that contribute to success in the schooling system.

This risk of elitism appears to have been borne out. While participation in higher education for Maori and Pacific students is proportionately high, that participation is concentrated in pre-degree programmes (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2017) and while the achievement rates of the University Entrance qualification are improving, there is still a significant disparity in attainment of University Entrance between socio-economic groupings. New Zealand schools are allocated a decile rating which reflects the socio-economic status of the parents of the pupils at the school. These range from 1 (being the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds) to 10 (being the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds) (Ministry of Education, 2017). There are limitations in using deciles as a proxy for socio-economic status because they are averages of the socio-economic status of students attending. However, notwithstanding that limitation, the data based on deciles show reason for concern. The statistics for achievement of University Entrance by school decile in 2016 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017) show a clear trend towards higher achievement being correlated with higher deciles, with only 30% of students in decile 1-3 schools achieving University Entrance compared with 65% of students in decile 8-10 schools. As well, Maori and Pacific students are only about half as likely to gain University Entrance as New Zealand European or Asian students, with achievement rates of about 30% compared with about 60% for their European

and Asian counterparts. The decile and ethnicity statistics are related in that Maori and Pacific families have poverty rates about double those of New Zealand European families (Marriott & Sim, 2014) and are more concentrated in lower socio-economic areas (Phillips, 2011).

Studies in New Zealand have shown that academic achievement at school can be an indicator of success at university (Engler & Smyth, 2011; Scott, 2008), but, as noted earlier, students from schools in lower deciles are less likely to achieve University Entrance. As well, a study by Jia and Maloney (2015) within City University has also shown that factors such as ethnicity and school decile can be relevant. Jia and Maloney's study used administrative data to develop predictive modelling which would enable the institution to identify which students were more likely to be at risk of not succeeding in their first year of study. It found that Pacific students were most at risk of not completing the first year while Maori students were most at risk of not returning for the second year. It also found that that higher achievement at school for all students decreased the likelihood of non-completion and that coming from a decile 1-3 school increased likelihood of non-completion.

Jia and Maloney's (2015) study provided useful insights into student success at City University. However, the authors noted that there were some factors that the administrative data did not capture and which they considered would be relevant in future studies. These included parental education, financial situation, and peer and community characteristics. This type of data, missing from the administrative data captured by the University, would provide a more holistic picture of students' backgrounds. A further way to provide a more holistic picture of students' backgrounds, albeit on a small scale, is to take a qualitative approach, which was the approach taken in this study.

Such data are also relevant to Bourdieu's thinking tools which were important to this study. As noted earlier, Bourdieu argued that the education system in France in the late 20th century contributed to social reproduction rather than social mobility (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). His argument was that success in the education system was seen as attributable to individual gifts whereas, in reality, it was attributable to the resources possessed by the dominant

classes (which he called forms of capital). These forms of capital were not possessed by the lower classes and, therefore, they were less likely to succeed in a system in which they were not comfortable or equipped to deal with (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

While 21st century New Zealand is very different from 20th century France, Bourdieu's arguments and the conceptual thinking tools he developed to explain the relationship between structure and agency, and the subjective and objective (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) have been influential in a number of areas including education, and have been drawn upon frequently to discuss a range of social contexts (Grenfell, 2012b). For these reasons, which are addressed more fully later, they were important in this study.

These thinking tools included forms of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic), field and habitus – all of which are interrelated (Grenfell, 2012b). These will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2, but, in brief, the forms of capital are the resources an individual possesses. Economic capital is wealth; cultural capital is knowledge or credentials that enable a person to succeed; social capital is social connections; and symbolic capital is honour and prestige (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital is used in a field which is a sub-part of society. People compete in a field and their position in that field is determined by the capital they bring to that field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Habitus is a system of dispositions that have been acquired through life experience (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). An individual's practice results from the relationship between their habitus and capital in a particular field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Bourdieu proposed these tools as a way of explaining and illuminating practices within different social contexts (Grenfell, 2012b) and they have continued to be used and expanded upon in a number of areas, including education, and have been used to consider experiences of different classes of students in higher education (see, for example, Bathmaker et al. (2016); Reay, Crozier, & Clayton (2010); Thomas (2002)). Three key conceptual developments of those tools that are relevant to this study are learning careers (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a), habitus tug (Ingram, 2011) and

trajectory interruption (Byrom, 2009) which are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Reflecting on participation in higher education in New Zealand, Strathdee and Engler (2012) noted that international literature suggests that lack of possession of forms of capital (social, economic and cultural) can be a barrier to progression. They identified a need in New Zealand for more quantitative and qualitative research to better understand the distribution of these resources and the connection of these resources to the higher education context. However, there are few examples of Bourdieu's thinking tools being used in the New Zealand (or Australian) context (Bennett, Frow, Hage, & Noble, 2013). This study contributes to the need identified by Strathdee and Engler (2012) in the New Zealand context, for qualitative studies considering the role of possession of forms of capital in higher education.

It will be seen in the next chapter that much of the literature that has used Bourdieu's thinking tools in relation to higher education has discussed student experiences by reference to class. It has been argued that while class continues to have an influence in some countries, the experience of inequality is multi-dimensional, with gender, ethnicity, age, disability and class all intersecting (Fleming & Gonzalez-Monteagudo, 2014; Finnegan, Fleming & Thunborg, 2014). It will be apparent from the foregoing outline of the context of the study, that in New Zealand, socio-economic factors and ethnicity are foregrounded when considering student participation and success in higher education, while discussion of class is not apparent. New Zealand has long considered itself to be a classless society (Belich & Wevers, 2008) and there has been little analysis of class (Phillips, 2011). While there are economic inequalities in New Zealand (which were present amongst the students in this study), Belich and Wevers note:

But class is not a tightly defined social phenomenon as it is in the United Kingdom. It does not govern New Zealand culture or behaviour; our society is, indeed, relatively permeable and ethnically mixed. (p.5)

Therefore, while analysis of the data in this study identified behaviours that could be viewed through the lens of class, as has been done in the United Kingdom, the focus in this study is on the behaviours themselves which, because the study is in the New Zealand context, are not attributed to class.

This study complemented the quantitative work that has already been carried out at City University by Jia and Maloney (2015). That work by its nature involved generalisations about who would be likely to possess the attributes or have had the experiences that contribute to success. The reasons for success are complex and involve the individual, the institution and external factors (Harvey, Drew, & Smith, 2006). The focus in this study on individuals acknowledged that complexity and the unique combination of experiences that each student brings to the higher education field. However, it is also acknowledged that it is not feasible to make policy for individual students. To make policy to support all students it is necessary to consider the student experiences more collectively. Therefore, this study also identified experiences, forms of capital and manifestations of habitus that were common to some or all of the participants, in order to identify where any interventions or changes might most productively be directed.

The study also focused on success at university rather than withdrawal from university. There is a large body of literature about student retention and success, a significant portion of which examines reasons for withdrawal. Tinto, (2007) a leading authority on student retention and success, stated:

Leaving is not the mirror image of staying. Knowing why students leave does not tell us, at least not directly, why students persist. More importantly it does not tell institutions, at least not directly, what they can do to help students stay and succeed. (p.6).

My decision to focus on success reflected a desire to take a positive approach to supporting social mobility. Focusing on withdrawal would have involved identifying barriers to success and trying to eliminate them - possibly only to find another barrier in the way - whereas a focus on success could enable

identification of what is already working for individual students, so that I can ensure these factors are retained and, where possible, encouraged in others.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions were influenced by Bourdieu's thinking tools in that they focused on past experiences of students and the backgrounds from which they came. They were intended to achieve the aim of better understanding what contributes to student success, by gaining an understanding of who the students were and what experiences and background they brought to their study at City University. The main research question was:

What do the stories of students' prior experiences and contexts tell us about why they succeed in the context of a university which is committed to widening participation?

Sub-questions were:

- *What are the students' contexts and the life and educational experiences they bring to City University?*
- *How do successful students explain their success?*
- *How do theories explain the contribution of these prior experiences and contexts to the success of these students at City University?*

1.5 Overview of the thesis

The next chapter sets out relevant literature. It begins with a discussion of Bourdieu's concepts and the developments of those concepts, which provide the central theoretical framework for the study, and discusses literature about student success. Chapter 3 introduces the research design, which is grounded in hermeneutics and takes a narrative approach. Chapter 4 sets out the stories created from the narratives and discusses commonalities between the stories. Chapter 5 discusses findings which are grouped into themes.

Chapter 6 is a conclusion answering the research questions and setting out some recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out the context for this study and noted that the work of Bourdieu was influential in the framing of the research questions. This chapter begins with a discussion of Bourdieu's work, before moving on to discuss developments of his ideas. The chapter then discusses the literature about student retention and success factors. New Zealand literature about student retention and success is then discussed, noting that, despite some references in the literature to concepts of cultural and social capital, there is limited literature in New Zealand higher education drawing directly on the work of Bourdieu.

2.2 Bourdieu's thinking tools

Pierre Bourdieu was a French anthropologist and sociologist who sought to explain the social environment primarily in French society (Grenfell & James, 1998) through an approach he called 'constructivist structuralism' or 'structural constructivism' (Bourdieu, 1989, p.14). In doing so he argued that education has a role in reproducing inequality in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). His work has been influential in a range of areas within the social sciences (Grenfell, 2012b) and has been heavily drawn upon in theoretical and empirical work in the area of higher education (Brooks, 2008). It is the basis for the development of theories relevant to this study, including the concepts of learning careers (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a), habitus tug (Ingram, 2011) interrupted trajectories (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013) and educated habitus (Nash, 2002), which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. First, Bourdieu's thinking tools will be explained.

Bourdieu saw structuralism as ignoring the role of agency and constructivism as not recognising the enduring structure of society (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). He sought to reconcile agency and structure, and the objective and

subjective (Reay, 2004) through an approach that recognised the continual interplay between them (Grenfell & James, 1998).

While influences on Bourdieu's work include both the Durkheimian and Marxist traditions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Collins, 1994), Bourdieu sought to distinguish himself from theorists and be known as a sociologist and empirical researcher (Bennett, Frow, Hage, & Noble, 2013; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Consequently, rather than presenting his work as a theory, he described it as a set of 'thinking tools' (Wacquant, 1989, p.50) which he intended to be used as a way of re-looking at the object of research in order to provide insights into the complexity of the social world, and ultimately leading to social change (Grenfell, 2012c).

Key to these thinking tools are the concepts of habitus and field (Reay, 2004) which, along with forms of capital, Bourdieu used in a relational way to explain the practice of people:

'[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice' (Bourdieu, 1984. p.101)

Habitus is "a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action." (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992, p.16). It is the embodiment of ways of thinking, feeling and speaking that are acquired through interaction with the particular part of the world in which the individual is situated and which structures the individual's perception of the world (Reay, 2004). The concept seeks to reconcile people's understanding of themselves as free agents with knowledge that people will behave in predictable ways arising from their conditioning within society (Maton, 2012). While a person is free to improvise a response to a particular situation, that response will reflect the person's experience and the constraints and possibilities that person has internalised (Brooks, 2008). This means that one person's response to a situation - for example, a decision about what to do after leaving school - will reflect that person's genetic inheritance, upbringing and experiences. One person may assume, almost unconsciously, that the natural progression from school is to

university, reflecting the values and expectations of that person's parents and perhaps a successful schooling experience where he or she performed well academically. Another person may have had a negative experience of school and have an expectation that the greatest value is gained by seeking employment after leaving school rather than further education. While these dispositions may be more likely to be attributed to particular groups of people (often middle class for the first example and working class for the second), the recognition of individuality in the concept of habitus is such that the second example could well be an artistic middle class person for whom a negative schooling experience, in which their artistic talents were not valued, sets them on a trajectory of rejecting further education as an option.

Habitus is at the subjective end of the relationship between subjective and objective (Grenfell & James, 1998). The objective end of the relationship is the field, which is a structured system of relations, such as institutions and groupings, which might be large or small (Grenfell & James, 1998). This is the social space within which interactions between people occur and within which there are people who dominate and people who are dominated (Thomson, 2012). Also within fields are doxa, which are the unwritten rules underlying the practice in that field (Maton, 2012). Within the field there is competition for power and dominance (much like a battlefield) over the form of capital that is effective in that field, for example, scientific authority in the science field (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992). The relevant field in this study is higher education in New Zealand, which is part of the larger field of education in New Zealand.

Bourdieu identified four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic, all of which take time to accumulate. Economic capital can be immediately converted into money; cultural capital can be embodied to become dispositions of mind and body, or objectified in the form of things such as art, music and can also be institutionalised - for example, educational qualifications; social capital is membership of groups that can influence and support a person. Finally, symbolic capital is honour and status and often the result of acquisition of other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Ultimately,

however, all forms of capital are rooted in economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

Forms of capital can attract other forms of capital. For example, high qualifications (cultural capital) can enable a person to secure a high paying job (economic capital). Within a field the capital is constantly being renegotiated as the value of forms of capital changes. An example is the ability to speak English in a non-English-speaking country. As that becomes more common, the value attached to that knowledge (cultural capital) will become less highly prized. People enter a field with varying amounts of capital, which will impact on their performance in a particular field or “make them better players than others in certain field games” (Grenfell & James, 1998,, p.21). An example in which differences in capital can be observed is a courtroom scene where a senior Barrister or Queen’s Counsel takes into the field of the courtroom more social and cultural capital in the form of reputation and respect (embodied in the bestowing of the title Queen’s Counsel), understanding of the nuances of the litigation process, and sometimes an easy familiarity with the judge, than a junior lawyer appearing in the same case might possess. The Queens’ Counsel has symbolic capital that is recognised in the process not only by the wearing of different attire but also by the right to be addressed by the judge before any other counsel in the room.

Bourdieu argued that the educational system contributed to social reproduction because the structures, expectations and understandings of what constituted success were a reflection of the dominant group’s capital in the field of education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Taking for granted the dominant beliefs (or doxa) by the dominated enables symbolic violence to occur because the dominated are complicit in the imposition of those beliefs (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). An example of this being applied more recently in the field of higher education occurs in relation to access to elite universities by working class students who anticipate not fitting into the middle class culture of these universities and consequently exclude themselves from applying for them (Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001).

2.3 Use of Bourdieu's thinking tools in higher education

Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus have been used extensively in the field of higher education, particularly in exploring reasons for inequality of access to university. Cultural capital has been seen as being particularly important in education, with the attainment of educational qualifications measured by quality and duration being the primary form of investment in cultural capital (Moore, 2004). The disposition to be academic and academic competence is known as "academic capital" which is a form of cultural capital (Naidoo, 2004, p.458). Cultural capital is socially conferred but is often seen as the attribute of a person (Moore, 2004; Naidoo, 2004) as can be seen in studies that have shown that teachers can mistake cultural capital for academic ability (Jaeger, 2011).

Social capital, which has been summed up in two words – "relationships matter" (Field, 2003, p.1) – has been closely linked with cultural capital in discussions about access to university (Brooks, 2008). Social networks have been identified as important in choosing schools (Ball & Vincent, 1998) and social capital as being important in assisting young people to access career information through parental networks (Ball, 2002).

In the context of higher education scholars have argued that the cultural and social capital possessed by the middle classes in terms of their familiarity with the education system and assumptions their children will progress to university, which working class parents are less likely to possess, are important factors in explaining why disproportionately fewer working class students attend university, and elite universities in particular (Ball, 2002; Brooks, 2008; Devine, 2004; Reay, Davies, et al., 2001). The middle classes have been described as "virtuosos" of university choice (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005, p.71) who draw upon family and other networks for information about university reputation (Brooks, 2008). As a result they are more able to contextualise that information and are less influenced by single personal recommendations than students from working class backgrounds who can have limited sources of information (Reay et al., 2005) and, because of limited family experience with higher education, are not aware of nuanced differences

between institutions (Ball, 2002).

These studies are examples of the way Bourdieu intended his thinking tools to be used. They have been used to re-look, through the use of empirical research, at the phenomenon of inequality of access to university for different groups in society. The literature in this area is fairly consistent in its findings that disparity in the possession of forms of capital is a contributor to this inequality, and, in the United Kingdom at least, this disparity is viewed as class based.

Habitus and field

Habitus and field are closely related, often described using the expression of a “fish in water” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.127) – that is, where habitus encounters a field of which it is a product, it takes its surroundings for granted, just as a fish would not notice the water in which it was swimming. However, where a person encounters a field with which they are unfamiliar, the resulting disjuncture can cause transformation or generate anxiety and discomfort (Reay, 2004). Until such an event, habitus operates at the unconscious level and only becomes conscious when something occurs to cause self-questioning (Reay, 2004).

Habitus, in conjunction with forms of capital and field, has been examined in a number of studies, which, like those focussing on the role of capital in access to higher education, were mostly class based. These studies have examined the experiences of working class students in higher education (Lehmann, 2012; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009; Reay et al., 2010), and both middle class and working class students’ experiences in getting to and completing study in a post-1992 university and a Russell Group university (Bathmaker et al., 2016) and in a range of post compulsory-educational environments (Atkin, 2000). All of these studies had a qualitative element and considered the students holistically in that their background, views and experience were examined to build a picture of the complexity of their situations. Again, these studies were relatively consistent in their findings that access to higher education and the level of comfort within higher education institutions varied

according to class, with those from the working classes less likely to access higher education or feel comfortable in elite universities, although there were examples of working class students at elite universities who were able to move between their two worlds with relative ease (Reay et al., 2009).

Habitus has been the subject of some criticism, including arguments that Bourdieu focused on the reproductive role of habitus without providing accounts of how it could be transformed (Brooks, 2003) and that the concept itself is deterministic (Jenkins, 1992). In considering criticisms of Bourdieu's concepts, it is worth taking into account that Bourdieu made it clear his work should be considered in the context of the times in which it was produced (Grenfell, 2012b). He saw the concepts as evolving and being continually reworked (Reay, 2004), which scholars have suggested creates a challenge to extend the concepts in terms of practical application without losing the original epistemological vision (Grenfell, 2012a).

While it may be correct that Bourdieu's focus was not on the transformation of habitus, that does not of itself mean that the concept is deterministic. This criticism is at odds with my understanding of habitus for several reasons. Firstly, that Bourdieu considered that habitus could be transformed is evident in his reference to habitus cleft, which is where a person encounters a new field and experiences a habitus divided against itself (Bourdieu, 1999). Consistent with Bourdieu's desire that the concepts be reworked, there has been subsequent useful work that builds on the idea of habitus cleft to consider how habitus is transformed (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013). The concept of habitus cleft, and the work on transformation of habitus, support the stance that the concept of habitus is not deterministic. Secondly, as noted by Reay (2004), to suggest that habitus is deterministic is ironic given that Bourdieu's rationale for developing the concept was an attempt to transcend the agency-structure, objective-subjective dualisms.

Reay (1995) herself was criticised for her use of the concept of habitus in the classroom as being an example of the uncritical application of Bourdieu's concepts (Tooley & Darby, 1998). Nash (1999), in a defence of the use of

habitus, argued that habitus was a useful tool with which to offer explanations and that, “the struggle to work with Bourdieu’s concepts ...is worthwhile just because to do so forces one to think” (1999, p.185). This is a sentiment that has been echoed by other scholars such as Grenfell (2012a), who argued that the use of Bourdieu’s concepts allows insights and interpretations not available elsewhere, and, indeed, by Jenkins (1992) who, despite his criticism, said Bourdieu’s work was “enormously good to think with” (1992. p.2). That this is so is apparent from some of the literature already referred to in which Bourdieu’s tools have been used to unpack some of the complexity of disadvantaged groups accessing and participating in higher education in a way that considers the individuals holistically.

2.4 Extensions of Bourdieu’s concepts

It is particularly in the area of habitus that scholars have extended Bourdieu’s work. Key areas of extension relevant to this study have been the development of the concepts of learning careers (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a), the habitus of an educated person (Nash, 2002), habitus tug (Ingram, 2011) and interrupted trajectories (Byrom, 2009).

Although, by stating that the development of Bourdieu’s concepts has focused on habitus, it may appear that scholars have not heeded the words of Webb et al. (2017), who urged a full engagement with Bourdieu’s conceptual tools in the widening participation debate and a move away from what Gale and Lingard (2015) termed a “Bourdieu-lite” approach (2015, p.1), this has not been the case. Those who have focused on habitus have acknowledged that Bourdieu’s conceptual toolkit is relational and examination of habitus necessarily involves consideration of the forms of capital and field (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a; Reay, Arnot, David, Evans, & James, 2004; Warren & Webb, 2007). Diane Reay, who for a number of years has focused on habitus (Reay, 1998, 2004; Reay, David, & Ball, 2001) and more recently on the intersection of habitus and emotion (Reay, 2015), was careful to be explicit

that habitus is only one aspect of the conceptual toolbox and it is the interplay between capital, field and habitus that generates practice (Reay, 2004). The scholars who developed and built upon Bourdieu's concept of habitus, discussed further in the sections below, similarly adopted a relational approach (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a; Byrom, 2009; Ingram, 2011; Nash, 2002).

Educated habitus

Nash argued that "if the full value of Bourdieu's method is to be achieved, it will be through the close investigation of definite habitus, as states of mind or effective dispositions" (Nash, 2002, p.46). Nash (2002) argued that the reason some students succeed at school may be as simple as their having a desire to be educated and possessing a habitus that supports practices to fulfill that desire. Nash (2001, 2002) carried out a quantitative survey of 5400 students from New Zealand secondary schools, as well as conducting a number of qualitative interviews. He used habitus as a way to explore the concept of an educated person through the interview data, finding that successful students possessed academic self-confidence and responded positively to the school experience and showed a willingness to be educated, which he called an "educated habitus" (Nash, 2002, p.27). Like Atkin (2000) in the United Kingdom, Nash (2002) found that working class students both were excluded from, and excluded themselves from, education.

While Nash (2002) used the concept of educated habitus in the school context, rather than higher education, the concept is nevertheless useful in this study in that it suggests an explanation for student success, which in my view can be applied to the higher education context. While the description of the features of an educated habitus does not of itself explain *how* a student may develop the habitus that leads to success (although Nash (2002) referred to class and cultural capital as being relevant in its development), it is useful to have articulated the elements of such a habitus to enable identification of whether it is evidenced in successful students in this study.

Learning careers

Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997; 2000a) used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital together with symbolic interactionism to develop the concept of "learning careers", defined as the development of dispositions to learning over time (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 1997, p.50). This was as part of a tentative theoretical framework of learning that was intended to challenge what they considered were some of the limitations of cognitive theories of learning, which did not address changes in learners' dispositions over time (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a). The development of the concept arose out of a longitudinal study of learners aged from 15-19 from which they concluded that learner pathways are not linear (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000b), and that student learning stories could only be understood when related to experiences outside formal learning (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a), including past experiences in education (Bloomer, 2001), and led them to an increasing recognition of the importance of the culture of the institution (Hodkinson & Bloomer, 2000).

The concept of learning careers considers the events, activities and meanings, both within the educational experience and outside it, and how those experiences relate to a person's learning. It recognises the structural interconnections between a student's home, school, peer group and work contexts (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a). A key feature of the concept that distinguishes it from much of the literature about student success, and through which its roots in the concept of habitus can be clearly seen, is the temporal focus - the tracing of changes in disposition to learning over time - as well as the consideration of events going on outside a student's educational experiences (Bloomer, 2001).

Learning careers is a useful concept for this study in that it provides a framework within which to trace changes in student dispositions to learning over time, while also recognising the influence of factors outside the institution. Thus it provides an holistic framework within which to take up Nash's (2002) suggestion of close investigation of dispositions, but takes that suggestion further by acknowledging that these dispositions are not fixed but may change

over time. It therefore provides a useful framework to examine how a student may have developed an educated habitus. Although Bloomer and Hodkinson drew on the concept of habitus, and noted changes in dispositions to learning and possible reasons for those changes, they did not analyse the changes themselves in terms of habitus, possibly because their work was a fusion of Bourdieu's work and symbolic interactionism rather than a sole focus on Bourdieu's concepts. Two further extensions to Bourdieu's concepts, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013; Ingram, 2011), discussed in the next section, provide a means to carry out an analysis more focused on habitus and identify points in a learning career which contribute to an educated habitus. They also provide an opportunity to respond to Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000a) acknowledgement that there was more work to be done to determine whether the concept of learning careers is useful.

Interrupted trajectories and habitus tug

Interrupted trajectories (Byrom, 2009; Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013) and habitus tug (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram, 2011) are useful concepts in that they can help explain how learning dispositions change in the course of a learning career. Both have their origin in Bourdieu's writing about habitus cleft (Bourdieu, 1999). They are examples of works that focus on particular aspects of Bourdieu's work as a form of useful analysis.

It has been argued that success in the field of education requires an alignment to the field's practices, values and principles (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013). While for the middle classes that alignment may be part of their habitus, for others, such as students from the working class, the process of alignment can be a gradual one which may involve the "erasure" of their working classness (Reay, 2001, p.334). Byrom (2009) argued that the process of alignment for working class students involves moving away from their class-based experiences through experiencing "trajectory interruptions" (Byrom, 2009, p.215) in the form of events or situations which take the students away from the norm for their group. This results in transformation because the

malleable habitus (Reay, 2004) is moulded to align with the education field's expectations (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013).

Related to the concept of trajectory interruptions and changing dispositions to learning, is the concept of habitus tug (Ingram, 2011). This is drawn from Bourdieu's concept of a cleft habitus where the habitus encounters a new field, and can become divided against itself and be in a constant state of negotiation (Bourdieu, 1999). It is this state that Ingram (2011) termed "habitus tug" (p.290). Abrahams & Ingram, (2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016) and Lehmann (2014) argued that this can produce three outcomes. The first is distancing oneself from the new field. The second is distancing oneself from the original field, which Lehmann (2014) noted can be a painful process and result in hidden injuries in the form of changes in relationship with family and friends. Finally, there is a third space where the person becomes adaptable and is able to move between fields. In New Zealand, a form of third space, being at ease with both the Pacific Island culture and the New Zealand European culture, has been termed "Polycultural capital" (Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010, p.2).

Both of the concepts of learning careers and interrupted trajectories illustrate the structured and structuring basis of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, whereby habitus is structured by one's past, but is structuring in that it helps shape one's future (Maton, 2012). Habitus can be a force in transforming a learning career and habitus can in turn be transformed (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a). The concepts of trajectory interruptions (Byrom, 2009) and habitus tug (Ingram, 2011) fit within learning careers in that all students will have a learning career and, while not all will experience trajectory interruptions, the disposition to learning of those that do may change and in the course of that process they may experience habitus tug.

Taken together these concepts, which extend Bourdieu's thinking tools, provide a useful holistic framework within which to consider the experiences of students during their learning career and whether that leads to the development of an educated habitus.

2.5 Factors in student retention and success

This study is intended to make a contribution to understanding student success, through insights arising from the application of concepts developed from Bourdieu's toolkit to higher education in New Zealand. Therefore, the relatively limited New Zealand literature about student success that already exists will be discussed. The international literature will be discussed first, in particular the literature of the United Kingdom and the work of Tinto (1993) in the United States, because a review of the literature in New Zealand suggests that Tinto's work is often referred to as a starting point and that literature from the United Kingdom has been influential (Prebble et al., 2004). This section begins with a discussion of what is considered to be success, before discussing student retention and success literature in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and finishes with a discussion about the literature that has addressed Maori and Pacific student success.

Success

Student success is a term that has more than one definition. In the United Kingdom, where a significant body of research about student retention and success has been produced, definitions of success have emphasised completion of a qualification within a certain period of time (Jones, 2008), with some scholars arguing that policy makers have made uninterrupted study to successful completion a "moral imperative" for institutions, with dropping out being seen as failure on the part of institutions and a deficit on the part of the students (Quinn, Thomas, Slack, Casey, et al., 2005, p.17). Further, some have argued that there is an underlying assumption that students begin study with a clear objective, which includes qualification completion, and that success can be measured by the extent to which students collectively meet those objectives, with judgments seldom being made about individual cases (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2001).

A similar perspective to the dominant approach in the United Kingdom, is taken in New Zealand government funding policies with "success" in the

higher education system in New Zealand being tied closely to retention and qualification completion within identified periods of time (Leach, 2016; Strathdee, 2011). However, this may be producing misleading data about achievement rates. Scott (2009) argued, based on a study of completion rates over a ten year period, that, by measuring qualification completions within a specified timeframe and basing the measurement on completion of the qualification first entered, achievement in higher education in New Zealand was being significantly underestimated because of the proportion of students who changed providers (20%), or who changed qualifications (40%), or who studied part-time.

As well as the risk of underestimating numbers of students achieving qualifications, defining success by completion of a qualification within a certain period of time is an approach that has been questioned as failing to recognise that dropping out of university can be a rational choice and a learning experience (Quinn et al., 2005, 2006). The focus on completion and retention rates has also been challenged as measures of the quality of college provision because they fail to take into account external influences in the decision to withdraw and further ignore the possibility that learning has taken place even if a qualification has not been achieved (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2001). The use of completion and retention data reflects a focus on “hard outcomes” (Zepke & Leach, 2010, p.662) and ignores “soft outcomes” (p.662), which address students’ perceptions of their learning and progress towards their own goals. These are measured by such things as attitudinal skills, practical skills, personal skills and work skills.

While it is understandable that education funders seek to contain exposure to cost through setting defined completion times, this is a narrow view of success. The significant challenges faced in the Business degree to meet this narrow view of success, represented by completion targets set by policy makers, was a factor that was influential in my decision to undertake this study.

Factors supporting retention and success

Student retention, particularly concerning students in their first year of study, has been an area where there has been a sustained attempt to develop theory and has been dominated by models of social and academic integration (Harvey, Drew, & Smith, 2006), which was a model that was first developed by Tinto (1993). A review of the literature shows that, for the most part, early studies focused on reasons for early withdrawal, rather than on reasons for success, and focused on student and institutional characteristics, rather than drawing strongly on sociological theory.

In developing his model in the United States higher education context, Tinto (1993) sought to move away from models of withdrawal that he perceived inferred some shortcoming on the part of that individual. Instead, Tinto sought to bring in the role of the institutions in relation to the individual. His theory was that the extent to which students were academically and socially integrated into universities informed their decisions about persistence or withdrawal. Academic integration is the extent to which students have experiences that relate to their academic development and motivation. Social integration relates to the connections students make to the university environment and which support satisfaction. In short, the model addressed both the in-class experience and the out-of-class experience. This has led to the view that universities need to ensure there is a mix of both academic and social experiences for students (Harvey et al., 2006).

There is a body of literature from the United Kingdom arising out of large scale quantitative studies in which attempts have been made to identify particular factors that were reasons for students withdrawing from university early. These include incompatibility between student and institution, inadequate preparation for university, financial issues, limited commitment and academic progress (Yorke, 1999), personal reasons, wrong choice of course, lack of integration and dissatisfaction with the institution (Davies & Elias, 2002; National Audit Office, 2007; Yorke & Longden, 2008). Identification of relevant factors that may lead to withdrawal is useful for universities to enable them to address those that they can, but it has been

argued that withdrawal cannot be attributed to one variable and is instead the result of combinations of student characteristics, external factors and institution related (Harvey et al., 2006), suggesting that a more holistic and student-centred approach is useful.

A more student-centred approach recognises that the use of terms such as retention, completion and drop-out reflect a managerial approach, whereas a focus on success reflects more of a student perspective (Yorke & Longden, 2004). Yorke and Longden (2004) emphasised the importance of the student experience, noting that “to focus on student success is, implicitly, to focus on the enhancement of the student experience” (p.133). In this study I have taken a similar approach in that I have investigated why students have succeeded, rather than focusing on why students have withdrawn, and thus have focused on the student perspective, rather than the managerial perspective. A focus on the student perspective of success and how that was achieved has the potential to add to the knowledge of which experiences could be encouraged for all students, so as to provide aspirational goals for educators, whereas a focus on withdrawal tends more towards suggesting which experiences should be avoided.

In a more holistic approach than the identification of individual variable factors leading to withdrawal, Yorke and Longden (2004) identified a three-way responsibility for student success that rests with institutions, students and the higher education system, with a call for the latter to take a more relaxed view of retention and completion. Their view was that seeking a “grand theory” (p.75) of student retention and success is likely to be futile. Rather, they concluded that student retention and success are “influenced by a complex set of considerations which are primarily psychological and sociological, but which are in some cases influenced by matters which might be located under other disciplinary banners such as that of economics” (p.78). This approach has parallels with Bourdieu’s thinking tools in that the forms of capital could be recognised under the sociological and economic considerations and habitus linked to psychological considerations. As such, Yorke and Longden’s (2004) three-way approach and recognition of the complexity of student success has

attraction as adding an holistic and individually-focused dimension, which builds on approaches that identify individual variables, to enable complexities of the individual student to be recognised.

Student success in the widening participation context has also been considered. Intra-university quantitative (Hixenbaugh, Dewart, & Towell, 2012) and qualitative (Thomas & Hanson, 2014) studies, and cross-university quantitative studies (Thomas, 2012b) have continued to emphasise the importance of social integration and a sense of belonging. Recognition of the individuality of the student and institutional commitment to the student experience have been found to be common factors in institutions that exceed national benchmarks in terms of widening participation and completion targets (Yorke & Thomas, 2003). The focus on the individual student has led to a strand of literature that has parallels with, and in some cases draws directly upon, Bourdieu's work on habitus. Kuh & Love (2000) in the USA developed propositions about student departure that focused on the culture of origin of the student and the culture of the institution, suggesting that the greater the difference between the two, the less likely a student might be to persist with their studies. In the United Kingdom the student's fit with the institution has been identified as important and has led to the development of the concept of institutional habitus (Reay, David, & Ball, 2001; Thomas, 2002), which builds on Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977) and has broad similarities with Kuh and Love's (2000) approach to the fit between institutional and student culture. The use of adjectives such as "institutional" in front of the term "habitus" has been criticised as risking a lack of analysis of the field in question and moving away from the relational approach intended by Bourdieu (Maton, 2012). However, what this strand of literature does do is to highlight that universities do have different cultures that include not only the institutional approaches and, in the United Kingdom, the pre-dominant class of students, but also the attitudes of the students to learning, and this too can have an impact on the student's fit with the institution (Reay et al., 2010).

Harvey et al. (2006), after reviewing significant literature in this area and noting the predominance of social and academic integration models,

suggested that theory does not take us closer to solving “the puzzle” of why students stay or leave university (p.34). While seeking a “grand theory” may be futile (Yorke & Longden, 2004, p.75), approaches that give holistic consideration to the relationship between the individual student, the institution, and external factors bring the literature more into alignment with the relational approach suggested by Bourdieu’s thinking tools. Such approaches reflect the supplementing of the literature with sociological approaches (Harvey et al., 2006) as part of recognising the complexity of factors that lead to persistence or withdrawal for an individual student and support the value of a study such as this one, which sets out to examine the complexities that led to that relationship being the way it is.

2.6 Student success literature in New Zealand

The literature about student retention and success in New Zealand is limited, and that which does exist largely reflects the developments in international literature, in particular the use of Tinto’s (1993) model of social and academic integration (Prebble et al., 2004). A key literature review was undertaken by Prebble et al. (2004) in which the authors developed a series of propositions to assist institutions in improving retention and success rates. These included recognition of the role of teachers both in being approachable and providing quality curriculum, as well as the role of out-of-class functions to support and provide information. In addition, it has been recognised that developing social networks can assist transition (Huon & Sankey, 2000; Thomas, 2002).

The majority of the propositions developed by Prebble et al.(2004) were drawn from Tinto's (1993) model, which, they argued, advanced an assimilation approach whereby the student is expected to assimilate into the institution. However Prebble et al. also argued that institutions ought be more adaptive to students rather than the other way around. This argument drew on the work of Thomas (2002), Tierney (2000), and Kuh and Love (2000), which recognised the role of a student’s cultural fit with the institution’s culture, and, as noted earlier, some of which has its roots in the work of Bourdieu. Prebble

et al.'s argument also drew on studies about the importance of cultural identity for Maori in student success, which suggested that cultural capital is a significant concept in New Zealand, as it is overseas (Bennett, 2001; Bennett & Flett, (2001). This argument was further developed in New Zealand, largely driven by Zepke and Leach.

Zepke and Leach drew upon Bourdieu's (1973) theory of social reproduction and the concepts of cultural capital and habitus to argue that institutions should take steps to adapt to students rather than requiring students to assimilate into the institution (Zepke & Leach, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2007; Zepke, Leach, & Prebble, 2005). It has been recognised that challenges are created for indigenous students when they feel they are being required to abandon their cultural identity (Walker, 2000) and that there is a contrary positive effect on educational outcomes where students feel a high degree of cultural identity (Bennett & Flett, 2001).

Good practice that would contribute to institutions adapting to students, rather than requiring students to assimilate into the institution, includes efforts to ensure correct pronunciation of students' names, an appreciation of different cultures, teaching the value of diversity, and adaptation of assessment to recognise diversity such as oral and group assessments, which would recognise the cultural capital vested in oral and communal learning traditions and student-centred learning (Zepke, 2005; Zepke et al., 2006). Some of these suggestions, including cultural appropriateness and supporting the confidence of the student, were identified in a study of Maori and Pacific student perceptions at one university as being helpful for them (Airini et al., 2011) and the suggestions about assessment and the importance of culture and diversity have been reflected as good practice in guidelines produced by Ako Aotearoa, the New Zealand National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence (Davidson & McKenzie, 2010; Honeyfield & Fraser, 2013).

The role of social capital has been recognised. In a study of the perceptions of 1246 students from nine institutions about the effect of non-institutional factors on studying (Zepke, Leach, & Butler, 2011), using a three point scale of little effect, moderate effect and strong effect, while most non-institutional factors

were perceived by the students to have a moderate effect on their study, family support and personal study were perceived by the students to have a strong effect.

Academic achievement at school

There is a body of quantitative work,(e.g. Engler, 2010; Engler & Smith, 2011; Scott, 2008; Ussher, 2008) mostly initiated by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and carried out in the past 15 years, which attempted to identify factors that will lead to success at university in New Zealand - with largely consistent results. These were all large-scale quantitative studies which variously drew upon demographic, retention, completion and achievement data. While none of these studies expressed the factors in Bourdieusian terms, some of them can be loosely correlated, for example, socio-economic status with economic capital, and cultural capital in the form of academic achievement.

Ministry of Education studies have found that students with high levels of academic achievement were very likely to pass their courses in the first year of degree level study (Scott, 2008), and that academic performance at school can be an indicator of the likelihood of success at university (Engler & Smyth, 2011). The identification of the role of academic performance in school as a predictor of first year performance is consistent with United Kingdom literature about school performance (Duff, 2004; National Audit Office, 2007).

Demographic factors

Demographic factors including gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status (with school decile used as a proxy) have been examined to determine whether they contribute to success in higher education. Studies have included a longitudinal study of 38,000 domestic students (Scott & Smart, 2005; Scott, 2005; Scott, 2008), analysis of large scale national data sets (Meehan, Pacheco, & Pushon, 2017), and smaller quantitative studies focusing on data from an individual institution (Jia & Maloney, 2015). These studies suggest that school decile has an impact on whether students gain University Entrance (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2016; Shulruf, Hattie, &

Tumen, 2008a), and that (at least at City University) mid-decile students are more likely to complete than low-decile students (Jia & Maloney, 2015). Jia and Maloney's (2015) study also found that decile 10 students were less likely to complete than mid-decile students at City University.

Ethnicity has been identified as a factor, Pacific students less likely to complete their first year at City University and Maori students at higher risk than other groups of not returning for a second year (Jia & Maloney, 2015). Maori and Pacific students have also been found more likely to achieve a lower grade point average in their first year (Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2008a). One study found that low socio-economic status and parental education were relevant but less significant than school performance as an explanation of the differing completion rates of qualifications within five years between New Zealand European students and Maori and Pacific students (Meehan et al., 2017). However, arguably, socio-economic status, parental education, and achievement at school are all related as suggested by the statistics presented in Chapter 1, showing the significantly different University Entrance attainment rates between low and high decile schools (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2017) and findings that Maori and Pacific people are more likely to be concentrated in lower income households (Marriott & Sim, 2014; Phillips, 2011).

Decision-making

As noted earlier, Scott (2005) found that almost 40% of students in New Zealand changed from the qualification that they began with. This suggests that decision-making could be a significant factor in traditional measurements of completion and success. Wrong choice, of course, has been identified as a factor that can lead to withdrawal (Martinez & Munday, 1998; McInnis, Hartley, Polesel, & Teese, 2000; McInnis, James, et al., 2000; Yorke, 1998).

The literature in this area in New Zealand suggests that, while information about higher education tends to come from parents for students in higher socio-economic areas, it tends to come from schools for students from lower socio-economic areas (Boyd, Chalmers, & Kumeakwa, 2001). This mirrors

findings in the United Kingdom (Bathmaker et al., 2016; Reay et al., 2009). Parental education levels and experience of the education system influence the decision to participate in university study in New Zealand (Leach & Zepke, 2005; Meehan, Pacheco, & Pushon, 2017). Again this reflects findings from the United Kingdom (Bathmaker et al., 2016) that, while middle class students took it for granted they would go to university with schools and parents playing a key role, the path was less clear for working class students who had to use more initiative and planning, and that, while their parents provided emotional support, they were less able to provide specific help and information.

Maori and Pacific student success literature

Perhaps as a reflection of the New Zealand Government's strategic prioritisation of Maori and Pacific success in higher education (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014) and the apparent disparity in both participation and completion in higher education for Maori and Pacific students, there have been a number of studies in New Zealand that have focused on reasons for success or withdrawal of Maori or Pacific students or, in some studies, both. This is in contrast to the literature about other students in higher education in New Zealand, which, apart from the large quantitative studies referred to earlier and the work of Zepke and Leach, is sparse.

Many of the factors that are identified as contributing to success or withdrawal for Maori and Pacific students are consistent with factors identified in the literature from the United Kingdom but add a cultural dimension not addressed in that literature. In a longitudinal qualitative study of 29 Maori and Pacific students called the Starpath project, Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer, and van der Merwe (2010a; 2010b) found that solid academic preparation, clear academic goals, and family support including the freedom to choose courses were important for success and that high academic confidence supported integration. Unlike many studies, the authors did not focus only on an institutional response, but also considered the role schools and families could play in preparing and supporting students. In particular, they noted that schools need to be well informed about university entry requirements, and

suggested that they work with families so as to ensure that students have clear academic goals and that they can support them in those goals. While the study did not refer to a particular theoretical framework, these findings align with the importance of cultural and social capital in the form of academic credentials, academic confidence, family support and understanding of the education system (Moore, 2004; Reay, 2000). The authors also concluded that the attention to individual stories through their narrative approach highlighted the risks of categorising students based on ethnicity or socio-economic status, rather than recognising their individual and specific needs in transitioning to university, a conclusion that aligns with the rationale for and approach taken in this study.

A more recent qualitative study involving 116 first year Pacific students found that those who were more successful in their first year were not first in their family to attend university, and had study strategies and realistic expectations about university that their peers who were struggling to achieve, and were first in family to attend, did not have (Teevale & Teu, 2018).

In findings that reflect the importance of the fit between the student and the institutional culture (Kuh & Love, 2000; Reay, David, & Ball, 2001; Thomas, 2002) the institutional environment and practices have been found to be relevant to supporting or creating a barrier to success. In addition to family, peer and financial pressures, as well as English not being a first language, the value of Pacific staff and role models, and student-centred approaches have been found relevant to Pacific student success (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006). For Maori students, recognising the importance of cultural identity (Gavala & Flett, 2005), moving away from a deficit model where the fault is seen to be that of the student (Earle, 2008), and providing culturally appropriate academic and pastoral support (Curtis et al., 2015; Curtis & Townsend, 2012), smaller classes and culturally appropriate practices, content and staff (Curtis et al., 2011) have all been identified as contributing to Maori student success.

In addition, the style of learning experience can have an effect. McMurchy-Pilkington (2011) advocated for a learning environment for Maori students that is more like the whanau (extended family) environment in which students have a sense of connectedness and belonging. Whanau have also been recognised in playing a key support role for Maori outside the institution (Williams, 2011) as motivators, and academic and financial supporters, and as a model for academic support (Wilson et al., 2011). Collective learning can both be appealing and contribute to success for Maori and Pacific students (Millward, Turner, & van der Linden, 2012) as well as being a recognition of Maori and Pacific students' culture by the university in an environment that can otherwise be perceived to be Eurocentric (Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, & 'Ofamo'oni, 2014).

Some of these studies have touched on the role of capital in the success or otherwise of Maori and Pacific students. For example, students who studied in a familiar physical environment with other non-traditional students reported feeling comfortable (Millward et al., 2012), as did students who were provided with a culturally-specific space to gather where they felt less intimidated by more traditional students whom they perceived to have more academic capital (Mayeda et al, 2014). Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) argued that being exposed to two cultures could be an advantage for students, and, drawing on Bourdieu's forms of capital, coined the phrase "Polycultural capital" (p.2), referring to Pacific students who had grown up being exposed to both Pacific and European cultures and could dip in and out of both with comfort, having the cultural capital, knowledge and skills from both. This has parallels with finding the third space when experiencing habitus tug, whereby a person is able to move between two environments relatively easily (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013).

Mila-Schaaf's and Robinson's (2010) reference to Polycultural capital and the work of Zepke and Leach about adaption (Zepke & Leach, 2005) are two examples of Bourdieu's work being explicitly used in the New Zealand context. However, in general, there has been limited application of Bourdieu's work in New Zealand (Bennett, Frow, Hage, & Noble, 2013). While research has

been undertaken in the area of sport (Falcous & Mcleod, 2012; Kane, 2010; Smith, 2014), and curriculum and practice in schools (Wood, 2013; Wood, 2012), little has been done in higher education. Nash explicitly used Bourdieu's toolkit, and provided a useful extension of Bourdieu's work in his concept of educated habitus (Nash, 2002), but his work was also focused on the schooling system. As noted, Zepke and Leach (2005) drew on Bourdieu's sociology of education in the development of an adaption as opposed to assimilation approach to student retention and, more latterly, Leach (2011) has again invoked Bourdieu in discussing diversity.

Other than the work of Zepke and Leach, the influence of Bourdieu's work can be seen only indirectly in higher education in New Zealand. The literature includes some references to cultural and social capital, but not always in direct reference to Bourdieu's toolkit. Much of the literature about Maori and Pacific student success reflects the call by Zepke and Leach (2005) for adaption rather than assimilation as much of it argues for insitutional changes to create an environment in which Maori and Pacific students feel comfortable. However, although these arguments implicitly draw upon habitus, the literature in this area does not explicitly apply Bourdieu's thinking tools.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter explained Bourdieu's thinking tools and discussed conceptual developments flowing from these tools. Warren & Webb (2007) argued that there has been a shift in educational research to draw on the work of Bourdieu in order to account for structure as well as agency, to counter what they consider is the doxa (or "taken for granted" point of view) of individual learner responsibility played out in policy. This shift was implicitly evident in the literature about student success factors, which moved to include recognition of the complexity of student withdrawal and success. The literature, which used Bourdieu's thinking tools and which extended those concepts as a means of explaining inequality of access and experience in

higher education in the United Kingdom, added an holistic approach to the literature that focused on individual factors for success, by exploring the relationship between habitus and capital in the field of higher education. These studies were mostly qualitative with more of an individual focus than large scale quantitative studies.

The chapter discussed four theoretical extensions to Bourdieu's toolkit. The first of these extensions is the concept of an educated habitus, which can explain why a student succeeds, but of itself falls short of explaining how that habitus was developed. The second is the concept of learning careers, which provides a link between the two areas of literature discussed in this chapter. It has its roots in the work of Bourdieu, but at the same time provides an approach in which the types of individual factors identified in the literature can be recognised and considered holistically within the framework of the learning career. The remaining two concepts discussed were habitus tug and interrupted trajectories. These can assist in exploring a student's response to the factors encountered in their learning career. Taken together they provide a useful framework with which to consider experiences that contribute to student success.

There is a thread running through the relatively limited New Zealand literature which identifies the importance of the fit between the student and the institution, and what institutions can do to support a comfortable fit. This strand of literature alludes to the concept of habitus, but this is not explicitly addressed or explored. The argument by Zepke and Leach that institutions should move to adapt to students, rather than requiring assimilation by the student, was more explicitly based upon aspects of Bourdieu's thinking tools, but in a theoretical rather than empirical way. Despite Strathdee and Engler's (2012) call for more studies that explore the role of capital in success in higher education, what is missing from the higher education literature in New Zealand is the use of Bourdieu's concepts, and the theoretical developments arising out of the concepts, in an empirical study that explores, in a holistic way, the complexity of individual student contexts and experiences, and the relationship of these to success.

This study addresses that gap in the literature in New Zealand by using concepts developed from Bourdieu's toolkit to explore success in the New Zealand higher education context, and, in so doing, adding to our understanding of student success. It complements the useful quantitative work already done at City University. It does so by using learning careers as a framework and adapting that concept by including the concepts of habitus tug and interrupted trajectories as a means to analyse transformations within a learning career and enabling a more direct focus on habitus as way of explaining the success of the participants in this study in the Business degree at City University.

Chapter 3: Research Design

In this chapter I explain the rationale for my choice of methodology and the shaping of my research. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section restates the aims of the research and restates the research questions. The second section outlines the rationale for my choice of a narrative approach underpinned by hermeneutics. The third and fourth sections set out the research design and address ethics. The fifth section discusses the data analysis process and the final two sections address reflexivity and validity.

3.1 Research aim and questions

As a practitioner researcher in a managerial role, my aim through the research was to enhance practice at City University in respect of the programme for which I had responsibility. Specifically, the aim of the research was to gain a better understanding of the educational experiences and life contexts of Business degree students and how those experiences and contexts might contribute to success in their degree. As discussed in Chapter 1, the study had a focus on success rather than withdrawal, and this in turn encouraged a focus on the student experience and student voice rather than a managerial approach based on retention and withdrawal data (Yorke & Longden, 2004).

As noted in Chapter 1, this research was situated in the initiation phase of change, in that a need for change had been identified in order to support better retention rates. The research aimed to give greater clarity about how to address that need through a better understanding of the complexities at play, clarity about where change needed to occur and the practicalities that might be involved in such change. All these aspects need to be determined before change can be implemented (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007).

As has been discussed, a quantitative study across all undergraduate programmes had already been undertaken at City University to determine whether particular factors can predict success in the first year of study (Jia & Maloney, 2015). In contrast, my study had a focus on the phenomenon of success through the experience of individual students. The central aim was to gain a deep understanding of students' contexts, perceptions and views about their educational experiences, in recognition of the complexity of psychological, sociological and other factors that contribute to student success (Yorke & Longden, 2004).

Polkinghorne (2010) noted that theoretical knowledge that is developed by testing hypotheses tells us what works on average but not for the individual. While such knowledge can be background knowledge, which can be taken into account in making a decision in a particular situation, practitioners find themselves in fluid situations with people responding differently at different times. Polkinghorne (2010) said:

Practitioner judgment is based on consideration of what action at this time, in this place, with these students, in this situation, and with these resources will help accomplish the goal. (p.394)

This study aimed to assist in such practitioner judgment through contributing to a better understanding of who our students are. This would assist in identifying aspects of their lives that contribute to or inhibit success that were outside the scope of support resources in the University, and give greater clarity about how University resources could best be used to support success for areas within scope, bearing in mind the individuality of students.

In the previous Chapter, I discussed the theoretical framework that has been applied in this study – that is, developments from Bourdieu's thinking tools. My focus on students as individuals was influenced by Bourdieu's thinking tools in which he sought to bring together subjective personal experiences and objective social structures, recognising that, while individual experiences may be unique, they may be shared with others from the same class or

background (Maton, 2012). The role of the unique personal experiences, together with the recognition that the development of forms of capital and habitus is something that is ongoing but occurs over a lifetime (Maton, 2012), suggested to me that a qualitative approach to the study would enable these different and multiple realities of the participants to be explored (Creswell, 2007). This is not to suggest that Bourdieu's thinking tools can only be used through qualitative research, and I acknowledge that Bourdieu himself undertook both quantitative and qualitative research, employing a wide range of methods (Thomson, 2012). However, my starting point in this study was that there was already quantitative data and predictive modelling in my institution relating to student success. My aim was to complement that data by exploring the complexity of the experiences and backgrounds of individual students.

The recognition that capital and habitus develop over time (Maton, 2012) also influenced the research questions, as the questions needed to look to the students' past as well as their current context in order to capture data that would be relevant to Bourdieu's thinking tools and developments of those tools such as learning careers. Thus, the questions included a focus on student background and past experience, rather than having a sole focus on current university experiences.

The main research question was:

What do the stories of students' prior experiences and contexts tell us about why they succeed in the context of a university which is committed to widening participation?

Sub-questions were:

- *What are the students' contexts and the life and educational experiences they bring to City University?*
- *How do successful students explain their success?*
- *How do theories explain the contribution of these prior experiences and contexts to the success of these students at City University?*

In taking such an approach, my study also provided an opportunity to consider the application of learning careers, habitus tug and trajectory interruptions - all developments from Bourdieu's concept of habitus - in a modern New Zealand higher education context.

3.2 Methodology and method

Hermeneutics

Student habitus is a concept that must be interpreted rather than observed (Reay, 2004). As well, habitus is a concept which requires consideration of past experience and the students' experiences outside university (Bloomer, 2001), and the focus on past experience lends itself to a narrative approach (Warren & Webb, 2007). These two aspects were influential in my choice of hermeneutics as a methodology and narrative as the method in the study.

I concluded that habitus as a concept resonated with hermeneutics as a methodology, not only because hermeneutics is the process in which the researcher seeks to interpret and understand (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) and is therefore aligned with the acknowledgement that habitus is something that must be interpreted (Reay, 2004), but also because hermeneutics acknowledges that those being researched have a background of "tradition" – the assumption, beliefs and practices of which we are never fully aware (Usher (1996) referring to Gadamer (1975)). There is a recognition that our interpretations and understandings are shaped by our own history and context (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Similarly, the concept of habitus recognises that experience helps shape vision and choices, and those choices will in turn shape a person's future possibilities and dispositions (Maton, 2012). However, in emphasising the relationship between habitus, capital and field, Bourdieu was suggesting that responses by an individual to situations, while influenced by social structure, are not necessarily pre-determined (Maton, 2012).

Hermeneutics fitted with a constructivist epistemology that, in the social world, human intelligence and wilfulness influence the way we view the world, resulting in differing perceptions (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). In seeking to

understand the complexity of views of participants, a constructivist researcher looks at the contexts of the participants and recognises that his or her own experiences will shape his or her interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2007).

The constructivist paradigm resonated with my own previous experience as a litigation lawyer, which frequently involved interpretation of both witness stories and legal texts. This had led me to a recognition that witnesses could experience and interpret the same events very differently, and judges could arrive at a different interpretation of both events and texts from that which seemed apparent to me as the lawyer. My first-hand experience of another party interpreting the same stories and arriving at a different conclusion helped my recognition in this study that I brought my own values and biases to the research (Creswell, 2007).

Narrative analysis

The method employed in this study was narrative analysis using semi-structured interviews. There are different views about whether narrative inquiry or research is a methodology or method. Moses and Knutsen (2012) defined methodology as the principles that guide or underpin a choice of method, and defined method as the specific activities through which data are gathered. Some of the leading proponents of narrative inquiry, such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Goodson and Sikes (2001) and Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin (2013), referred to narrative research and its variants as being a methodology in its own right with Caine et al. (2013) labelling their methodology “Narrative Inquiry” and distinguishing it from other forms of narrative research. Others treated it as a method underpinned by different methodologies. Merrill (Merrill & West, 2009) drew on feminist theory, while Polkinghorne (1988), Bentz and Shapiro (1998), and Erben (1996) took the approach that narrative research is situated in the area of hermeneutics because it involves understanding and interpreting the narratives of lives. I chose to adopt Polkinghorne’s approach for the reasons I outline below.

While there may be debate about whether narrative research is a methodology or a method, there is more consensus about the underlying ontology and epistemology for narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Polkinghorne (1998), some of the leaders in the more recent developments in the area of narrative research, explicitly contrasted narrative research with a positivist approach. In contrast to a positivist paradigm, narrative research in the literature that I reviewed was firmly situated within the constructivist paradigm and is, therefore, a good fit with my own ontological and epistemological views outlined earlier.

The approaches to narrative research are many and varied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1989; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Merrill & West, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1988), but a common element of the varying approaches is the acknowledgement that the narrative as told by the participant is interpreted by the researcher. Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggested that there is no one way of doing life history research (a form of narrative research) and that it is individualistic and personal. They made a distinction between life stories and life histories, with the latter adding a layer of interpretation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) adopted an approach that appears to be influenced by ethnography. Their starting point was that narrative research is about representing and understanding experience.

While there are differences in approach to narrative research, what is consistent is that it involves creation of a story from the data narrated by the participant. The process of interpreting the data into a story was labelled “restorying” by Creswell (2007):

Restorying is the process of reorganising the stories into some general type of framework. This framework may consist of gathering stories, analysing them for key elements of the story (e.g. time, place, plot and scene) and then rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence (p.56).

Polkinghorne referred to the development of a plot with an ending or “denouement” (1988, p.15). This was in contrast to Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) who took the view that the stories do not have a beginning or an end. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advocated an approach whereby the researcher immerses himself or herself in the field to “settle in, live and work alongside participants” (p.67) and observe what is and what is not said. Building on this, Clandinin and others have later stated (Caine et al., 2013) that narrative inquiry starts from an ontological position of curiosity about how people are living, and requires the researcher to enter into the participants’ ordinary experience. This approach, which has ethnographical overtones, was not ideal for my research questions, which, as set out earlier, were essentially backward-looking in time in order to capture students’ past experience. Also, it was impractical, because of the time frames of this project, and would have been inappropriate, given my then position as Director of the programme in which my participants were students, to immerse myself in the students’ experiences.

I chose instead to follow Polkinghorne’s (1988,1995) approach, which is less ethnographic and has an end-point in mind. Polkinghorne’s objective was to identify the events leading up to the phenomenon under consideration, which in my study was student success. Polkinghorne’s approach suited my research questions, which were framed around the experiences that had contributed to that success. The time at which I interviewed the participants did not mark an end-point in their studies or in their success. However, they had reached a threshold of the phenomenon I defined as success (the definition of which will be discussed shortly but in brief was that they were in at least their second semester of study), which enabled them to be included in my study to better understand the events leading to that point.

3.3 Ethics

I obtained ethics approval from both the University of Liverpool Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee on 24 February 2016 and the City University Ethics Committee on 24 March 2016. Letters of confirmation are

attached as Appendices 1 and 2. My role as Director of the Business degree did not involve teaching, and I had not taught, and would not be likely to teach, the students involved in the study. Nevertheless, in applying for ethics approval, I was conscious that my role as Director of the programme from which participants were to be drawn could be seen as one of power and I needed to take steps to ensure that students did not feel coerced to participate. The Participant Information Sheet confirmed the voluntary nature of the study; that I was undertaking the study in my capacity as a student and not as Director of the Business degree; and that the data collected would not be used in relation to the participant's participation in the degree as a student. The Participant Information Sheet also confirmed anonymity and confidentiality. I arranged for the Deputy Director for Undergraduate Programmes to deal with all individual student issues going forward, so that I would not be put in a position of either having to make a decision about an individual participant's performance in the degree, or potentially identifying a participant by having to remove myself from the decision-making process after it arose. I also undertook to arrange for fellow academic staff to distribute flyers in their classes inviting participation in my study, rather than attending the classes myself and distributing them. I wanted to take an active approach, which can yield better response rates than a more passive email approach (Kaba & Beran, 2014), and this also fitted with the preferences of the City University Ethics Committee.

I advised participants in the Consent Form that they could withdraw from the study at any time up until the end of the data collection period, without any need to explain, and I reassured the participants in the interviews that there would be no consequences in terms of their degree if they chose to withdraw.

My ethics application was thoroughly considered by both the University of Liverpool and City University, with both institutions requiring amendments or clarification before giving approval. I was, therefore, confident that my application had met the high standards required by both institutions. I remained alert to possible ethical issues arising during the study, but no issues arose.

3.4 Data collection

Sample

I undertook purposive sampling - that is, where participants are picked as a result of having particular characteristics (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This is most often used in qualitative research in order to achieve representativeness and to focus on particular issues (Cohen et al., 2011). In my study the sample population was Business degree students. There were two further criteria for inclusion. The first was that the students had to have come through the New Zealand school system, and the second was that they had to be in at least their second semester of degree study at City University.

The requirement to have come through the New Zealand school system was driven by my focus on domestic rather than international students as universities only receive funding for domestic students and it is those students in respect of whom the Government has set retention and completion targets. It is also domestic students who are the target group for widening participation in the New Zealand Government's Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014).

For the reasons outlined in Chapter 1, the focus of my study was on successful students. As discussed earlier, the meaning of success in higher education is contested. Although I did not have a pre-determined view of what constituted success at City University, in order to determine my sample population I needed to adopt an initial definition of "success". I defined it as still being at university after the first semester of degree study, as this implied that, even if the participants had not passed all their first semester courses, they had passed some and were continuing with their studies in the Business degree. I was able to ensure this was the case by arranging for flyers to be distributed only in classes that were taken by students who had successfully completed at least some of the first semester compulsory courses.

There were approximately 4000 students studying the Business degree of whom approximately 3000 were domestic students. Approximately 700 of those were in their first semester of study at the time I was recruiting for

participants, leaving a sample size of approximately 2300 students.

While for narrative research the goal is not to obtain a representative sample, and the sample size can be as small as one, Cousin (2009) suggests that at least five narratives are needed for plausibility. My aim was for ten participants in the hope that this would result in a range of backgrounds. The domestic student population in the Business degree is diverse and I wanted to see if there were any commonalities despite the diversity, which would provide further insight into student success.

Approximately 1000 invitations to participate were distributed by academic colleagues in lectures for courses that were for students in their second semester or beyond. These courses were chosen because they had large numbers and were compulsory courses in a range of majors. I continued to ask for invitations to be distributed until I had responses from ten participants who met the criteria for inclusion. The ten participants were at a range of stages in their Business degree from second semester to final year.

I sent all respondents a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form and, upon confirmation they were still happy to participate, I arranged an interview time by email. I offered all participants the opportunity to meet at a place that was convenient for them but they all chose to meet in one of the meeting rooms I was able to access, away from the Business School.

Interviews

In order to provide focus on the educational aspects of the participants' lives, I undertook interviews with broadly chronological questions such as "tell me about primary school; tell me about secondary school" followed by more probing questions for clarification or to encourage elaboration. My questions were intended to be broad enough to encourage the students to tell their stories but also to ensure that my research questions would be answered by bringing the focus onto family context and educational experiences. The interview schedule is Appendix 3. Atkinson's (1998) range of questions that can be used in narrative research provided a useful starting point for

consideration of the type of questions - both in terms of style and content - that might be useful in eliciting the narratives I was seeking. I was also very familiar, from 15 years of practice as a litigation lawyer, with the difference between open and closed questions.

Prior to commencing the interviews with the participants, I undertook a pilot interview with a respondent who did not meet my sample selection criteria but who agreed to be interviewed as a pilot. She was a mature student who was only in her first semester of the Business degree but who had studied previously. This was very helpful as it enabled me to gauge whether the questions I had proposed for my interviews would elicit stories of experiences and whether the interview timing was appropriate. I was aiming for interviews of up to 90 minutes. The pilot interview confirmed my estimations of time were realistic and helped refine my probing questions and the time I spent on questions.

I transcribed the pilot interview prior to embarking on the main interviews to gauge how long it took, as my intention was to transcribe the interviews myself. My reflection as a result of transcribing the interview was that I needed to be careful not to jump in with a question and change the direction of the participant's narrative, and I was conscious of this in subsequent interviews.

Main interviews

I undertook six of the interviews in May and June 2016 before the semester ended, and the remaining four interviews were carried out in August 2016 after students returned for the next semester.

At each interview I was conscious that the participants had given up their time to talk to me, and that I would be asking them to tell me about themselves and their lives, more than they might normally expect to reveal in their university context. Coupled with that, I wanted them to be open in their responses and felt they would be more likely to be so if they were relaxed. Therefore, I tried to make the participants feel comfortable on arrival, thanking them for their

participation and making it clear that it was up to them what they shared with me, as it was their story. I confirmed with them that I would be developing stories from the interviews, which I would then send back to them for feedback. I proposed to send the stories rather than the transcript because my primary concern was to ensure that they agreed with my interpretation of their narrative. I was also conscious that the transcripts were likely to be lengthy and I did not want to over-burden the participants, whereas the stories were likely to be much shorter. I also got their consent to the interview being recorded so that I could transcribe it. I recorded the interviews on a handheld recorder and also using the Voice Memos app on my mobile phone. I confirmed to the participants that the data from the interview would be stored securely on my personal computer, and that I would delete the recordings off the phone and handheld recorder once I had a copy of them on my computer. I also confirmed to them that their participation would be confidential and that I would be giving them a pseudonym. Once we had discussed these details and gone through the Consent Form, each participant signed it.

The interviews ranged from just under an hour to two hours, with most being around an hour. While my probing questions were intended to seek clarification and expansion, I was conscious that this sometimes led to my influencing the extent to which we discussed a particular topic. At the same time, however, I was conscious that the narratives belonged to the participants and, as part of their sense making process, they would choose what to include and what to leave out (Usher, 1996).

I sent an email to each participant after the interview thanking them for their time and for sharing their interesting story, and confirming that I would be back in touch once I had drafted their story.

Transcription

I transcribed the interviews myself. This was time consuming, particularly for the long interviews, where the participants spoke quickly or where there were accents, but there were very few words that I was not able to decipher.

Transcription by the researcher himself or herself enables the researcher to get closer to the data and is, in itself, a form of analysis and interpretation (Fraser, 2004). I found this to be the case. By transcribing the interviews myself, I felt that I became very familiar with the data. As I transcribed, I noted down events in the stories that seemed to have a connection with an outcome. In some cases I found that my initial mental recollection of the interview had privileged some information and glossed over other information. This highlighted to me that interpretation (albeit loose) by me as the researcher had taken place on an almost unconscious basis. This reinforced to me the importance of approaching interpretation systematically through the detail of the transcript, in order to do justice to the richness of the data. By the end of the transcription and before writing up the stories, I had identified what I thought were connecting events or events that seemed to be important or influential in each story.

Transcribing the interviews myself enabled me to reflect on my interviewing technique and also encouraged me to be more relaxed about the length of the interviews. This was because I realised that it was not necessarily the case that a longer interview meant more useful data. Some of the experiences or views that I interpreted as important or influential events or observations were expressed very succinctly on occasion.

3.5 Analysis of data

In this section I discuss the two-stage analysis process that I undertook – firstly restorying and identifying commonalities, and then re-analysis of the data through a Bourdieusian lens.

First stage of analysis - restorying and commonalities

Polkinghorne (1995) made a distinction between analysis of narratives, and narrative analysis. The former involves collecting and analysing narratives for common themes across them. The latter involves collecting descriptions of events or happenings and configuring each into a story using a plot. In the

latter, the descriptions of the participants are not broken up into themes as they are with analysis of narratives. Rather:

In this type of analysis, the researcher's task is to configure the data elements into a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose. The analytic task requires the researcher to develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in denouement. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.15).

Narrative analysis was appropriate for my study because of the focus I had on the individual stories, and the complexities in the contexts and experiences of the students that, taken as a whole, may have contributed to their success or otherwise at university. Analysis of narratives would not have enabled me to understand the holistic impact of those experiences and contexts but instead would have broken them up into common factors across the stories, separated from the holistic context of each individual. Narrative analysis allows for "a direct interpretation of a complex unit of social interaction, in comparison to the standard approach where such inferences are based on decontextualized bits and pieces" (Mishler, 1986, cited by Polkinghorne, 1988, p.166). I was interested in the combination of factors in the stories that had connections to an outcome.

The development of a story or plot from the descriptions provided by the participants was descriptive narrative research because its aim was to provide, through a story, a description of the interpretive account provided by the participants to make sense of the events in their educational experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). This is in contrast to explanatory narrative research which aims, within the narrative itself, to provide a complete explanation of the questions asked (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Although less explicit than explanatory narrative research, descriptive narrative research can go some way to explaining why events occurred, by representing the stories participants used to make connections between

events (Polkinghorne, 1995). It is a form of analysis in that it involves “detection, selection and interpretation of the data” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.169). The need for the story to reflect the interpretive account the participants had intended (Polkinghorne, 1988) was one reason why I asked the participants for feedback on their stories.

I undertook an iterative approach to developing the stories for each participant. I began the story process by listening to the recording again and making notes. I then wrote a draft story based on the notes I had made during the transcription process and the most recent re-playing of the interview. In doing so I tried to capture what I considered to be important events and connections between events.

Polkinghorne (1988) noted that an event can only be seen to be linked with an outcome with the passage of time. As I undertook the analysis process, I knew the whole story or outcome that had resulted with the passing of time, and that influenced my interpretation of whether events were important or linked. This is an example of the hermeneutic circle of interpretation, where interpretation of the part depends on interpretation of the whole, and vice versa (Usher, 1996). My interpretation of an event depended on my interpretation of the whole story, and my construction and interpretation of the whole story depended on my interpretation of events and their contribution to the story.

In order to ensure my stories had a thread and were coherent, and to enable me to identify commonalities, I undertook a coding process. I generated codes from the data using inductive open coding - that is, a new label to describe and categorise a piece of text (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). This was a descriptive coding process. The codes for each individual were then grouped into broad categories either by similarity of experience or similarity of reaction to an experience.

The categories were personal to each participant because, at this stage, my focus was on the analysis of the data from each individual and how that data could be constructed into a story.

In acknowledgement of the data being personal for the participants (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), the need for the stories to reflect their intentions (Polkinghorne, 1988), and the double hermeneutic, where both the researcher and the researched are sense-making (Usher, 1996), I sent the relevant story to each participant by email asking for their feedback, correction of anything they felt I had misunderstood and checking they were comfortable that they were not identifiable from the stories. All participants responded quickly and all were very positive about their stories. There were a few minor changes requested as the result of some options I had suggested to make the participants less identifiable, and one request to change the pseudonym given. One participant liked the story but wanted it to convey more strongly the emotion that she had experienced. We agreed on some changes, which I then incorporated.

Inclusion of stories in the thesis

The stories have been included in the thesis. This is for several reasons. As noted earlier, Polkinghorne (1988) viewed the development of the plot and identification of connectedness between events and the outcome as a form of analysis. The stories addressed my first research sub-question - *What are the students' contexts and the life and educational experiences they bring to City University?* - for each individual student. They also illustrated the complexity and individual nature of student success and student withdrawal (Yorke & Longden, 2004) and gave some coherence to the connections between the events that led to the students' success (Polkinghorne, 1988). The stories also went some way to answering the second question – *How do successful students explain their success?* – because the stories represented how the students understood the connections between the events they chose to relate, and their success at university. For these reasons, the stories form part of the findings, and as such were appropriate to include in the thesis.

In addition, I was influenced in my decision to include the stories in the body of the thesis by my own experience as a reader and learner. In their respective books, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Merrill and West (2009)

modelled their discussions about narrative research with examples of stories. As a reader I found this useful as an aid to my understanding of the material being presented. Similarly, in theses that I read (for example, McIntyre, (2011) and Watts, (2009)) I found the inclusion of the stories aided in my reading of the analysis of those stories. There is more limited scope to include stories in articles, but my view was that, where this was done in articles using narrative research (for example, Calma, (2013); Guerin, Kerr, & Green, (2014); Germeten, 2013)), the complexity of individual situations was conveyed more strongly than in other articles using narrative research that did not include stories (for example, Daly-cano, Vaccaro, & Newman, (2015)).

The stories were written in the third person, in part as an acknowledgement of my role in interpreting the data to develop the stories, but it also had the pragmatic advantage of not having to deal with accents and use of language. However, I did use some of the language that the participants used. Also, I wanted to present the stories in the same style, so that similarities and differences in the content were accentuated and idiosyncrasies of speech were not a distraction. I hope that the different personalities of the participants come through to the reader from each story.

Commonalities

In seeking to make positive changes in my institution, it was necessary to identify any areas of commonality in order to determine what will have general benefit for students. Although the focus in developing the stories was on the individual, narrative research can also contribute to collective understandings, without losing respect for individual voices (Trahair, 2008), by identification of commonly-shared understandings and meanings (Cousin, 2009). Polkinghorne's (1988; 1995) earlier work promoted the stories that were developed as an end point in the analysis. However, in later work, Polkinghorne (2007) noted that, while stories alone are enough to provide insight into participants' experiences, further interpretation can deepen the readers' understanding by finding commonalities in stories and comparing or contrasting them with social science literature.

In order to determine whether there were any commonalities between the stories, I drew on Braun and Clark's (2006) approach to thematic analysis as a guide to this process. I grouped the categories I had developed for each student from the coding process I had undertaken during the restorying phase, into areas based on similarity of experience or response to experience. This resulted in a list of areas that addressed current and past aspects of the students' lives, and their attitudes to learning. Each of these broad areas represented an area of commonality. Although this was an open approach to the data, rather than being explicitly theory driven, I was conscious that themes or commonalities do not just emerge from the data but are influenced by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and, perhaps unsurprisingly given the underlying theoretical framework and the questions asked, the commonalities identified during this stage corresponded broadly to some of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital.

Second stage of analysis - themes from Bourdieusian lens

The stories and the identification of commonalities did not explicitly address the third research sub-question - *How do theories explain the contribution of these prior experiences and contexts to the success of these students at City University?*

While the forms of capital and the intersection of habitus and field were implicit in the stories, I carried out further analysis of the transcripts to more explicitly interpret the data through a Bourdieusian lens. I did this by identifying forms of capital, habitus and the changes in learning dispositions that made up the learning careers (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a). Using different forms of analysis is consistent with hermeneutic inquiry which involves movement back and forth between looking at texts and analysing their meaning and returning to the object of the inquiry more than once, each time with an enhanced understanding and interpretation (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Having analysed the data using narrative analysis, and using open coding to identify commonalities, I then looked at all the data again through a Bourdieusian lens.

In this stage of the analysis I drew on the work of Merrill (Merrill & West, 2009) and Reay (1995). Merrill noted that in her own work with Bourdieu's concepts she analysed data by identifying forms of capital, the individual's attitude or disposition in particular situations, and the individual's relationship with structure. Reay (1995) posed a set of questions that are useful when focusing on habitus and were therefore useful for my analysis, because concepts such as learning careers and habitus that formed part of my theoretical framework were developed from the concept of habitus. These questions included:

- How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in ?
 - How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting?
 - What subjective views do they bring to the present and how are they manifested?
 - Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions?
- (Reay, 1995, p.369)

I re-coded the transcripts, this time in a more interpretative way following Merrill's (Merrill & West, 2009) advice to relate the stories to the theoretical framework by identifying forms of capital, interactions with structure, dispositions evidenced in those interactions, and attempts to change position in a field. I then prepared a commentary for each participant, in which the forms of capital were identified and in which I attempted to address the questions posed by Reay (1995).

As I was analysing the data, and subsequently preparing and reviewing the commentaries and the stories, I looked for any patterns, commonalities and recurring regularities (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that the analysis through a Bourdieusian lens added to the areas of commonality already identified in the first phase of the data analysis. The identification of themes came only after an individual analysis had been undertaken through preparing the commentary, rather than identifying themes across the raw data.

This was to be consistent with the narrative analysis approach taken earlier (as opposed to analysis of narratives) in order to retain the focus on the individual.

The themes that resulted from this phase of the analysis were influenced by the initial categories I had identified as commonalities in the stories, but were more closely aligned with Bourdieu's concepts because of the questions that had been asked in the analysis. I acknowledge that in identifying the themes I made choices, and that other choices could have been made, with different themes being identified. One example is the role of religion which some students mentioned as part of their discussion about their family, which in my analysis was subsumed into values and family support.

3.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is important in interpretivist research (Scott & Morrison, 2007) recognising that research cannot be value free (Greenbank, 2003). To assist with my reflexivity in the research, I kept a journal recording my reflections and responses throughout the whole thesis process. This was useful, not only as a means of processing ideas and thoughts but also providing a record of reflections and responses that I could return to at a later date as my understanding and interpretations evolved.

Erben (1996) noted that the double hermeneutic, in which both the researched and the researcher undertake interpretation, involved an appreciation on the part of the researcher of not only what is being interpreted but also of the researcher himself or herself. In the narrative context, it also means that the story as told by the participant is data personal to them because they too are trying to make sense of the story by telling it (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). I was conscious as I was interpreting the data that my response to events led me to place greater or lesser weight on the contribution of particular events to the story. Both the awareness of how my own biases might influence interpretation of the data, and the recognition of

the data being personal to the participants were influential in my decision to provide the participants with the stories for their comment.

I acknowledge that in a study such as this, there is a risk that because of my position, the participants may have said what they thought I wanted to hear. However, that was not my sense in the interviews and there are several factors which are relevant to this. Firstly, my position as Director was not a visible one to students generally. Although I stated my position on the Participant Information Sheet, it was apparent that several students did not know what my position involved, because they explained to me either the structure of the Business degree or what the Foundation Programme was. Secondly, although all the students were positive about the environment at City University, a few were also critical about individual aspects of it, including aspects of Orientation, the lack of availability of one-on-one help and difficulty in understanding some of the tutors' accents. Finally, my perception was that the interviews flowed well and that the students were very open.

I also acknowledge that my research was driven and shaped by my values, including a commitment to widening participation. I was conscious, however, that I was unsure what that meant in my context. I considered widening participation to be something that should be supported but my wider reading, particularly around Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of capital, and my own knowledge that significant numbers of students in the Business degree failed, gave rise to some doubts about how this was working. Those doubts influenced my research in the sense that I had an underlying hope that my study would support widening participation as a concept. I took some comfort about the influence of this value on my research from Gadamer's (1975) concept of fusion of horizons (Usher, 1996). This concept, which is also part of hermeneutics, acknowledges that, in seeking knowledge, one has biases and prejudices that are impossible to escape from, but in the process of connecting with other perspectives or horizons, the result is an enlargement of one's own horizon. In my role I deal with students at the collective level and often deal with student statistics that have led me to some generalised views. The research process enabled me to get to know some students as

individuals. I was humbled by the resilience and determination shown by some of the participants, compared with the smooth path to higher education that I had experienced. In that respect, I felt that my own horizon was broadened and the research contributed to my understanding of widening participation in the University context.

3.7 Validity

There are differences in approach to validity between quantitative positivist research and qualitative interpretivist research (Cohen et al., 2011). It has been argued that the criteria applied to positivist quantitative research, such as validity, reliability, generalisability, replication and objectivity, are not applicable to interpretivist qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011; Scott & Morrison, 2007), and that the latter should focus on authenticity and a recognition that the researcher cannot be completely objective (Cohen et al., 2011).

In the context of narrative research, Polkinghorne (1988) argued that validity usually refers to the strength of the analysis of the data and reliability refers to the dependability of the data, which is evidenced, not through formal proof, but by demonstration through the details of procedures that the data is trustworthy. In later work, Polkinghorne drew on the Latin roots of the word validity which are “strong, powerful and effective” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.474). He noted that it is important to remember that, in narrative research, stories are evidence of personal meaning rather than historical truth and that validity in the stories can be enhanced by returning to the participants to ensure the stories captured the meaning they intended, as I did in this study.

Polkinghorne (2007) considered the interview process to be important for validity where a relationship of trust, and acknowledgement and attentiveness to the influence on the interview by the interviewer, can encourage openness by the participant and ensure the story is that of the participant, not the interviewer. Similarly, Merrill and West (2009) approached the concept of

validity by drawing on the Latin roots of the word validity. They, too, argued that strength may be defined by narrative richness, and effectiveness may be defined by creating an environment in which people are encouraged to find their own voice through the quality of the research relationship. Merrill and West argued that narrative research can generate rich and detailed accounts that are different from one another, noting that “variety is not the antithesis of validity” (2009, p 166). I tried to encourage openness and trust in the interviews. I was encouraged in my view that the participants had been able to find their own voice because almost all the participants stated, unprompted, that they enjoyed the experience and a number commented that they had talked about things that they had not thought of in that way before and it was a sense-making experience for them.

Polkinghorne (2007) noted that where, as is the case in this study, further interpretation takes place, then to show validity researchers need to make clear whether the researcher is stepping out of their context (*Verstehen*) or, as is the approach I have adopted, taking a hermeneutical approach acknowledging that they cannot do that, and that their perspective has influenced their interpretation. He argued that validity is demonstrated through the cogency of the argument, supported by evidence.

My study addressed validity and reliability through a process which enabled collection of rich data, which, once formed into stories, was confirmed with the participants as being an accurate representation of their sense-making of their experiences. I have set out in detail the process of data collection and analysis that was adopted in this study, in order to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the data. I acknowledge that generalisations cannot be drawn from 10 participants and their stories. However, the aim of this type of research is not to generalise but to generate understanding from depth (Cousin, 2009). Rich detail and its interpretation, while focusing on the particular, can also be related to wider social understanding (Merrill & West, 2009) and enable the reader to determine how the research can apply to their own setting (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.8 Summary of Chapter

In order to answer my research questions, I adopted a narrative approach to the study underpinned by hermeneutics. I followed Polkinghorne's (1998, 1995) narrative analysis approach in which the data was formed into a story in which connections were made between events and the outcome of success at university. To ensure that all the research questions were investigated, I identified commonalities across the stories and then re-analysed the data through a Bourdieusian lens, focusing particularly on forms of capital and the interaction between structure and agency. From a profile for each student, broad themes were identified. The next chapter sets out the stories and the commonalities identified from the first stage of the analysis.

Chapter 4: First Stage of Analysis - The Stories and Commonalities

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the two-stage analysis process that was adopted. This chapter sets out the stories and includes a discussion of commonalities between the stories that formed the first stage of analysis. The reasons for including the stories were discussed in Chapter 3 and included the fact that the stories are findings which go some way to answering the first two research sub-questions:

- *What are the students' contexts and the life and educational experiences they bring when they come to City University?*
- *How do successful students explain their success?*

The stories also complement the analysis that follows in the next chapter by tracing the students' learning careers and highlighting their complexity and individuality.

Each story is presented in its entirety in alphabetical order of pseudonym. The chapter then discusses commonalities between the stories.

4.2 Students' stories

Aaron

Aaron is 22 and in the second semester of the Business degree. He lives at home with his parents and three siblings. The family are Tongan and belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon). Aaron's mother grew up and was educated in New Zealand but moved to Tonga when she was 20. She met Aaron's father and they came to New Zealand to have a better life for their children. Aaron's father gained a Certificate in Automotive Engineering and has his own automotive business, and his mother, after

gaining a qualification several years ago, is working as a healthcare administrator. Aaron's older sister is studying commerce at another university.

Aaron grew up in a New Zealand city suburb with what he describes as a typical childhood of being outdoors, climbing trees and playing with the other kids in the street. He enjoyed the local primary and intermediate schools he attended. He has positive memories of the schools in general and of several teachers in particular.

Aaron went to the local college, which he found very large and different from intermediate. He had a goal to do his best but was distracted by friends who were more focused on rugby. By year 11 Aaron realised that he would need to do some work for NCEA. He worked hard in years 11 and 12 and achieved solid passes in NCEA levels 1 and 2.

In year 13 Aaron's family moved and he attended a new college. This school was very focussed on rugby. Aaron had not been in the top streams at his previous school, but for the first half of year 13 he was top of the class. Aaron's rugby league team was selected for the national finals, which was a thrill, but overall rugby proved too much of a distraction in the second half of year 13, and Aaron did not pass his exams or gain University Entrance.

It had been Aaron's intention to go to university. He knew a few accountants from his church and thought their lifestyle seemed appealing. At his previous school he would regularly visit the careers office and sit various tests to see what would be a good career for him, but accounting was never one of them. Aaron's parents had always emphasised the importance of education. Their view was that their children needed to get some sort of qualification after school rather than going straight into the workforce but were relaxed about whether it was a university or other qualification. When he did not get University Entrance, Aaron had to choose something other than university. He had worked with his father in his automotive engineering business and decided to enrol in a Certificate in Applied Technology in Autotronics. He was awarded a scholarship by a local polytechnic. Aaron did well in the first

semester but various distractions, including friends, resulted in Aaron not passing the second semester. His friends also failed.

Aaron's intention was to repeat the semester and complete the Certificate but in the meantime he had to go on his Mission for the church. For the following two years, Aaron spent time in two Pacific Island countries. The days were very structured and disciplined with early starts, a 9pm curfew, two hours a day spent studying and half an hour each night spent planning for the next day. Aaron learnt the languages of the countries he was in. He also observed that there were very different levels of education and infrastructure between the two countries and he put that down to differences in access to education.

Upon his return home Aaron completed his Certificate in Applied Technology with top marks. Aaron wanted to continue to study as he knew that if he wanted to get anywhere in life he would need to get a degree to get a foot in the door. He applied for Engineering and Business at a different university from City University, but was declined. He was accepted for the other university's foundation programme (a bridging programme for prospective students over 20) but after one evening he knew it was not for him. Aaron applied for Engineering, Science and Business at City University. He was declined for Engineering but accepted for Science. However, he realised within the first two days of lectures that Science was not for him. He withdrew so as not to waste money and went away to the Temple in another city for a few days to get some inspiration. On his way back, he received a call from Business at City University saying he was accepted and he enrolled into the Business degree.

Although Aaron had missed the first week, his lecturers were helpful and he caught up. While the size of the campus was daunting at first, Aaron has got used to that and was pleased to find that there were workshops as well as lectures. He has made some friends from classes and clubs and did well in the first semester. He has been lucky with group-work in that he has been placed with like-minded people who want good grades. Since his return home Aaron has brought with him the discipline and routine that he learned on the

Mission, and a new understanding that education is key. While getting into the city and the cost of parking is a challenge, Aaron attends classes and actively participates by asking questions, even in large lectures. The experience of learning new languages on the Mission showed Aaron that he was not too old to learn new things and now he is eager to keep learning and to be able to teach others. His father is already seeking advice from him about his business.

Aaron does not yet know what he wants to do but knows he wants to do something in Business. He expected Business to be all numbers but is pleased that it is broader than that and he is loving it. He is majoring in Economics and Finance because he sees them as integral to Business, enjoys them, and feels his personality suits them.

Daniel

Daniel is 21 and New Zealand European. He lives at home with his mother and two brothers and his mother's former partner. His father has three children from a former marriage. Daniel's parents divorced when he was quite young and, although his father has now moved away, he sees him relatively regularly.

Daniel grew up in a rural area on the outskirts of a large New Zealand city where there was some racial tension. He went to a number of schools. He was enjoying primary school until he was held back a year. He was young for his class and struggling with Maths a little. This meant his friends went on ahead without him and he found it difficult to make friends in the year he was moved to.

In year 7 Daniel went to the local year 7-13 college where he was bullied by both the students and the teachers. After six months of avoiding going to school, Daniel persuaded his family to move to a different town. In the new town Daniel went to a nice school where he made lots of friends. He went on

to the local college but had only been there six months when the family moved into a suburb in a large city.

Throughout his primary school years, Daniel developed a love of learning. He was a curious child and asked lots of questions. From an early age his family thought he was the one who would do well. He later found the school system frustrating because he was not allowed to stay inside and study and when he got ahead in the curriculum he was told to wait until the following year to be taught more.

Although it was a big adjustment coming from a country town to the city, Daniel enjoyed college and did well. Most of the teachers were amazing and would go out of their way to help the students succeed. Until year 10, Daniel had been sick a lot from tonsillitis and missed a lot of school. Both his year 10 and year 11 Maths teachers helped him catch up by the end of year 11 by giving him one-on-one help in their own time. He credits this help as the reason for his success in Maths. He also considers that, in part, he was able to catch up in year 11 because the school system pitches years 8 and 9 too low, so that the slowest in the class can catch up when they should be receiving one-on-one help and letting the others move on.

Daniel considers himself to have been poor at English at school, in part because he didn't have English teachers who were dedicated and prepared to give him one-on-one help and because he felt the system was such that, after year 9, he was not taught to write.

By year, 13 Daniel did not really know what he wanted to do. He had initially thought he might get a job after leaving school and work his way up in the organisation. Neither of his parents had been to university, but Daniel's mother had always been keen for all her sons to go to university so that they could get good jobs. Some short stints doing manual work for a friend in the school holidays convinced Daniel that this type of work was not for him and that, if he wanted to be spontaneous, and learn new things on the job, he would need to go to university.

At the end of year 13 Daniel was not sure what he wanted to do at university and was tossing up between Business and Engineering. His mother was relaxed and wanted him to do something he enjoyed. Daniel decided to do Engineering at City University – he had seen a flyer in his Physics classroom and he thought it would be creative and fun and would fit with his Maths and Physics interests.

Daniel did not find the level of work particularly different from school, with the exception of one particularly difficult paper, which he felt had far too much content for one year, and which he failed. He took the next year off study, other than successfully repeating the one paper (which by then had been cut down), and had a job selling insurance. Daniel did not enjoy that job, partly because he felt the product he was supposed to be selling was not a good one.

While Daniel had learned a lot of useful information from first year engineering, the syllabus for second year Engineering held no interest for him. Daniel decided to change to Business and enrolled in the Business degree. His girlfriend has been supportive about his decisions.

Daniel has found Business to be more relaxed than engineering. He is doing well. When he got to university, he found that his writing significantly improved after using Grammarly for a couple of months, because it gave him instant feedback. He finds it difficult to get one-on-one help at university and things like peer mentoring sessions are often timed so that they would eat into his evening time, so Daniel finds it is easier just to go home at the end of the day.

Daniel loves the architecture and vibrancy of City University, and it inspires him to learn. He is happy with his choice of university. He also still loves learning for the sake of learning. He is in his second semester of the Business degree and is majoring in Finance and plans to do a second major in Management. This is to meet his goal of being useful, and, therefore, secure, in the job he ends up in. Daniel is pleased that, as well as meeting that end,

he is finding the subjects interesting. Daniel hopes he will be able to influence those around him and have an influence in the world.

Dinah

Dinah is 19 years old. She is Samoan. Dinah was born and raised in a large New Zealand city. Her parents were educated in Samoa but left school before completing high school. They emigrated to New Zealand to try and offer better opportunities for Dinah and her older sister. Dinah's father has been with the same employer since arriving in New Zealand and is now a supervisor, and her mother is a receptionist. The family are Seventh Day Adventists, and religion plays a big role in their lives. Dinah has been brought up with Samoan values and her parents have been active in supporting her with her faith. Her first language is Samoan, which she spoke exclusively until she went to primary school. Dinah speaks Samoan when she is at home with her parents and English when she is out.

Dinah grew up in an apartment building surrounded by other Samoan families and lived there until she was 10. Her friends from the apartment building all went to the same small primary school as her, which made school fun. She was not really interested in the academic side of school. She did, however, receive a trophy for English while she was at primary school.

In year 9 Dinah went to the local girls college that her sister was already attending. Dinah did not want to leave primary school and go to college. She had heard that college was hard and, as well, it was an all girls school, whereas most of her friends from school were boys.

Dinah missed her friends at college but joined up with a new group of friends. This group was not interested in working hard but instead would hang out at the library. Dinah thought that this was being cool and it helped her fit in with the new group. Dinah did not do well academically in years 9 and 10. She skipped school and she would hide her report cards from her parents.

In year 11 this changed. Her parents knew about NCEA level 1 and told her she had to pass. Her parents had told her stories about their own education in Samoa and that they wanted a different situation for her and her sister. They told her education was key to getting a good job and having a good future. None of her extended family had gone to university. She wanted to make her parents proud. As well, her parents said that if she did not pass they would take her phone off her.

Dinah took subjects in year 11 that would be easier to pass. Dinah was shocked that she achieved level 1 with merit. Her parents thought she was not the type to pass, and, when they found out, they were crying because they were so proud.

Dinah resolved to do well in year 12 also but it was much harder. She took the same subjects and, although her grades slipped during the year, she still just passed. By year 12 Dinah had a different group of friends who all had the same goals and background. She was also in the choir and the Polynesian club.

In year 13 Dinah picked up Religious Studies and Classical Studies. She continued with Computing, which she really enjoyed. She was the choir leader and leader of the Polynesian club, both of which took a lot of time and she gave these priority over studying. Part way through the year, Dinah was not doing well at Classical Studies and her Dean counselled her to drop it. Dinah changed back to studying Employment. At the end of the year, Dinah was surprised to find that she had got the Computing prize and a Pacific Women's scholarship. She also got a prize for Community Contribution. Dinah thinks her parents were more shocked than she was, because she wasn't the smart type, so for her to get the Computing prize was awesome.

Dinah mistakenly thought that Computing was an approved subject for University Entrance so was devastated to find out when the results came out at the end of year 13 that while she had passed NCEA level 3, she did not

have enough credits from approved subjects to gain University Entrance. This meant that she could not pursue her chosen course in communication studies. Dinah's parents thought university would be hard for her, but she knew her parents would be sad if she did not go to university and would feel they had come to New Zealand for no reason.

Dinah found out from school that she could do a Foundation Course in Business at City University and that would give her University Entrance. Her parents were reluctant to let her leave her home town, but agreed, as it was her only option. She arranged to stay with her father's sister's family. Dinah had imagined university to be like the movie "Pitch Perfect" and, when she got to university, she was disappointed that there was no choir. However, her class members looked out for each other and she made friends with a group of people who helped her and encouraged her to study. Dinah achieved her goal of passing the Foundation Course and gained University Entrance.

Dinah's parents wanted her to return to her home city to study. However, although she had been homesick, she had got used to the City University environment. She was also enjoying business so decided to do the Business degree.

Dinah does all her study at university before going home to her Aunt's place because her cousins like to play loud music and she has to babysit some of her younger relatives a lot. She finds praying in the morning and in the evening is helpful – it grounds her and keeps her focused.

Dinah is enjoying the Business degree and doing well. She has become a student ambassador so gets to help other students. Her current goal is to finish her degree, so she can make her parents proud, and get a good job, so she can help her family. She does not know yet what she wants to do for a job.

Emma

Emma is 22 and lives at home with her parents and younger sister. Her mother is a qualified nurse who is in medical sales, and her father has held various business roles and is currently starting up a new business. Emma is 1/16th Maori and part New Zealand European. She spent a lot of time at her Marae as a child but describes herself as not looking Maori nor as speaking the language, and as having had an otherwise New Zealand European upbringing. Her father is very keen for her to recognise their Maori heritage. She identifies as Maori on the City University official forms.

Emma grew up in a suburb of a large New Zealand city. The first primary school she went to was in the next suburb, but she was sent there because her parents had heard it was a good school. Emma loved school and had lots of friends. She changed schools when the family moved to another house that was very close to the local school. Emma enjoyed the new school even more. She was top of the year academically, was put in extension programmes and made good friends.

Emma went to an intermediate school with a number of her friends from primary school. Again, Emma loved school. She was in an extension class, loved the schoolwork and made lots of friends.

Emma's parents looked at various options for secondary school, including entering into a ballot for a grammar school and applying for a scholarship to a private school. Emma did well in the scholarship exams for the private school but was not really keen to go to the school because she did not feel comfortable with the level of privilege, so was not particularly motivated at her interview. Emma ended up going to the local college.

Emma also loved college. She was in the top or second stream all the way through college and did well academically. She was no longer top of the class and realised that she could not rely on her natural ability alone to get her through. Emma made good friends who were high achievers in the top

streams. Many of them are still her friends. Emma thinks she was probably one of the least hard working in her group. In the early years Emma was involved in a lot of extra-curricular activities, but this gradually dropped off as she reached the senior years. She regretted this a bit in that, by the time she got to year 13, she felt a bit left out. Emma did the Cambridge exams rather than NCEA because her friends were doing Cambridge and her parents were keen because it would give her more opportunities.

Emma always knew that she would go to university. Her parents had instilled that into her from an early age, because they had not been to university and Emma was determined to go. Her parents said that if she did not know what to do, she could do a gap year, but she was expected to go to university after that year. Emma decided to do a degree at City University, which she had heard good things about. She met the high selection criteria and enrolled. Emma found the transition to university relatively easy. She was in a cohort and, although things were a bit overwhelming at first because the cohort had a significant number of obviously wealthy private school students, they were outgoing and friendly, and Emma quickly settled in. She didn't expect university to be such fun - the course was fun and Emma made new friends as well as keeping some friends that had come through school with her.

In her third and final year Emma had to choose a major. She hated the major she chose and very quickly realised that she did not want to have career in it. She also hated the experiential work they were doing. She dropped out of three courses and worked full time, while completing the one course she was finding palatable. She decided to change to a Business degree because she had enjoyed business studies at school. She expected her parents to be very upset, but she had talked to them about how much she was struggling and, when she presented her plan to switch to Business, they were fine about it.

Emma changed to Business the next semester. She is majoring in Accounting and has decided to add a major in Marketing. Business is very different from her previous degree in that the work is harder. As well, the demographic profile of the students is different and they tend to keep to themselves, do

their work and leave at the end of class. Sometimes that makes it hard to get out of bed in the morning to come to class and Emma relies on an out-of-university club for making friends. Emma's student loan is enormous and she is hoping that there is no limit on how long she can get it for, as she will need it for six years in total.

Emma is not sure what she wants to do – she does not envisage a long-term career in the Accounting firm she is working in and is more interested in doing something in Marketing, if there are any jobs. She has hit a wall in terms of motivation. She knows from her school experience that good grades require effort, but at this stage she is just going through the motions. She needs to get a degree and she just wants to be done with university. Despite this, Emma is achieving the benchmark she has set herself of getting solid grades. Emma is hoping to find a job that she enjoys and wants to get out of bed in the morning for.

Eva

Eva is 22 years old and is in her second year of the Business degree. She has three younger sisters and three younger brothers ranging from age 21 to 7. The family are practising Christians. She was born in Samoa, and her family moved to New Zealand when she was 11. Eva's father was a teacher in Samoa and currently works for a furniture manufacturer. Her mother stays at home to look after the children.

Eva grew up in a small village in Samoa and attended the local school where her father taught. There were very few books and resources, but Eva was an able student who understood that school would help her for the future. Eva loved school even though she got scared when other children were beaten for misbehaving or not getting their work right. Reflecting on this now, Eva thinks that some teachers in Samoa did not understand that ability or family life can affect a child's learning and does not think children should be beaten when they get their work wrong.

When Eva's family came to New Zealand, she only spoke basic English and found everything confusing and scary. The family spent a short time in a large New Zealand city with relatives then moved to a small North Island city that had very few Pacific Islanders. Her parents wanted to focus on their children's future and thought moving away would help them adapt and learn the language more quickly.

Eva's father loved teaching, but the combination of the very different approach to discipline and the need to retrain made it unfeasible in New Zealand. Eva found the much more relaxed approach to discipline at school very disconcerting and initially got angry with disruptive classmates who were wasting her valuable learning time. Eva soon became frustrated and angry about having to learn in a new language and adjust to a new life. During her two years at intermediate and in year 9 at the local high school she didn't try hard, and was rude to her teachers and often in trouble. She hated school other than Maths and Sports.

In year 10 her father was angry when he found out from the teachers how she was behaving, and told her to change her ways. Eva's fear of her father prompted her to work hard and behave well. As time went on, the teachers started to reward her for her achievements, which motivated her to behave and work for herself rather than for her father. She made new friends by helping others with Maths in exchange for help with English. She started to enjoy school more and felt like she could be a person who was academic.

By year 13 Eva was seriously thinking beyond school to university but thought it would be scary adapting to new systems. Her father was keen for her to go to university, but her mother was hesitant about potential bad influences. Eva found year 13 hard and was devastated to find, when the results came out, that she had missed University Entrance by a few credits because her English had let her down. She was angry and felt her whole year had been wasted. She tried to get a job but couldn't. Eventually she went back to the school to seek some guidance. It was too late to accept the school's offer to help her

resit for extra credits, but she found out about a local polytechnic course in Tourism and Business. Eva enrolled because she had to do something.

Eva completed that course and another one in Computing and found out that she could use it to get into university. She applied to a university but was declined except for a bridging course. However, this would not have got her to Business School, which was what she wanted. Eva was accepted into the Foundation Course in Business at City University. While her parents were excited, they would only let her go to City University if she could find a family to stay with. They did not want her to stay in a hostel as they considered her Christian life was more precious than her education. Eventually, it was agreed that Eva would stay with her mother's cousin's family.

Eva thought it would be easy staying with relatives, but it was not. The parents had arguments about sending money back to Samoa. This made Eva feel she had to contribute more money to the household, so she felt pressured to get a part-time job. Eva spent as much time at university as she could to avoid going home. She did not want to tell her parents she was unhappy with her living situation in case they made her return home. Despite this challenge, Eva managed to pass the Foundation Course and gained entry to the Business degree. She had been so proud to get into university, she didn't want to mess up by not passing. Eva successfully completed the first semester of the Business degree, but her living situation and having to work took its toll on her ability to study, and she did not do as well in her second semester. At the start of 2016 she realised she needed to reprioritise and to speak up. Her parents came up and had a talk with her cousins, and since then things have been much better.

Unfortunately, because she failed some papers, Eva's student allowance was reduced, so she had to increase her working hours to survive financially. Nevertheless, she is now doing better. She has followed her father's advice to surround herself with good people; she attends all classes and she attends Peer Assisted Study Sessions. She is starting to get her confidence back that she will finish and achieve her goal.

Eva's love of Maths led her into Accounting at school, and she changed from wanting to do something physical and sporty to wanting to do Business. However she didn't enjoy Accounting so much at university and instead has decided to major in Economics and Management - both subjects she enjoyed in her first year. She is not sure what she wants to do but is considering working her way up to being a bank manager.

Lily

Lily is 25 years old and lives with her husband. She grew up in a small village in Thailand. Her parents divorced when she was one, and her grandparents brought her up, as her mother had to go to Bangkok to work to support her. She would see her mother once a year for up to a week. The village was very traditional and her grandparents brought her up with Thai values such as respect, time management and self-responsibility.

Lily started school when she was 7. She enjoyed school, had lots of friends and did well. When she was 12 she moved to the Junior High School. Lily's grandparents could not help her with her homework – her grandfather had left school at an early age and her grandmother could not read. This meant that Lily had to be more responsible for her learning but she enjoyed that. She got good grades and earned certificates of achievement and was a class representative. She was independent, assertive and confident about her learning.

Lily continued on to senior high school at age 16, even though she knew she would soon be leaving to join her father in New Zealand, as had been his wish for some years. Lily planned to go to university and had been considering her options under the Thai system. Her mother and grandparents encouraged her to go to university so that she could have a better life and not a life of manual labour. She was excited to be going to New Zealand because she thought she would get a good degree. She had planned to graduate when she was 21.

Lily found her first four years in New Zealand very hard. She lived with her father, stepmother and two younger step-sisters. She felt there was no one she could talk to who understood what she was going through and she did not want to worry her mother. She went to a local secondary school and after one week was put into the English as a second language (ESOL) unit where she remained for the rest of the year. She found it frustrating that in subjects such as science, she had already covered the content in Thailand, but her limited English meant she could not answer the questions. After the first year she moved to a closer secondary school where she stayed for two more years doing a mixture of ESOL classes and NCEA level 1 and 2. Lily knew she wanted to do a business degree. She took Business Studies but failed it twice and ended up doing a mixture of ESOL subjects and subjects such as Hospitality and Tourism, and Early Childhood Education as well as Maths. Lily received a number of awards from the school in Maths, ESOL and other subjects. This was a happy time in an otherwise challenging few years.

At the end of her third year in New Zealand, Lily decided that going back to school for a further year would not help her get to her goal of doing a business degree. She knew her own ability and decided she needed to reach her goal by a different route. She researched her options, including how she would finance further study, and enrolled in a one-semester English course at a polytechnic. She completed two further years of English study at a University. When she did not get into the Foundation Course in Business at City University she decided to go back to the polytechnic and do a Business and Communications Certificate there. Lily achieved excellent grades in that certificate and was subsequently accepted into the Foundation Course in Business at City University.

Lily passed the Foundation Course in Business and enrolled into the Business degree. Lily's father had said he was supportive of her studying and thought Business was a good degree. However, he placed significant demands on Lily, in terms of household chores and cooking, and expected her to be home for a lot of the time to attend to these chores. Lily found this interfered with her

ability to study and make connections with friends and potential employers, and prevented her from being independent and making her own decisions. Respect and trust were also missing in her relationship with her father. Lily became depressed. She felt she had no option but to move out of home to try and set herself free from the depression. She was working over 20 hours per week to support her study. She found it very difficult to work until 10pm at night then go home and read in preparation for 8am lectures the next day. Her grades suffered.

Part way through her first semester in the Business degree, Lily's grandfather died. She was worried about the impact going back for the funeral would have on her grades, as they were not good. After discussing it with her fiancé, Lily made the decision to pull out of her study. She took the remainder of the year off and got married. Her life was up and down, but she remained focused on her goal and returned to studying the Business degree the following year.

Lily chose City University because she understood it would provide her with the support that she thought she would need. She enjoys City University and likes the teachers and the subjects. Although generally she does not find students here as friendly as in Thailand, she has made friends and they support and help each other. It is important to her that she becomes a critical thinker and problem solver so that she can find information and answer questions. Her childhood experience of seeing how hard her mother has had to work is a motivator for her to succeed so that she can get a good job and support her mother and family.

Although Lily found her former home life was not conducive to studying she would always tell herself that tomorrow will be better. Her husband has a degree from China in Electrical Engineering and had intended doing further study here. However, he has given up that dream to support her and is working hard as a builder. He is very supportive and motivates her. She has an additional motivation this year to succeed in her study in that she wants to build a house for her mother in Thailand. She finally feels happy with her life

and with her study and is starting to get back some of the confidence she had in Thailand.

Nadia

Nadia was born in a North African country. She has six siblings - two older and four younger. Nadia's family is Islamic and religion plays an important role in their lives. Her four younger siblings were all born in New Zealand and while the family lead a life that she described as a "Kiwi lifestyle" they also strongly identify as North Africans.

Nadia's extended family in North Africa is wealthy and her grandfather had been an advisor to the ruling regime. Nadia's mother did not have any schooling whereas Nadia's father's family were all educated, her father to tertiary level. When Nadia was a baby her parents emigrated to New Zealand, but Nadia was required by the extended family to stay behind. Nadia was brought up by her paternal grandparents in North Africa. Nadia's grandparents did not send her to school. She filled her day by playing with neighbourhood children who also did not go to school.

When Nadia was 11 her parents persuaded her grandparents to bring her to New Zealand. Nadia arrived in New Zealand speaking no English, not having gone to school and not really knowing her parents. She found the transition to a new family and new country very difficult.

Nadia began in year 6 at a local primary school and attended an ESOL unit and was able to speak English within six months. However, when she moved to intermediate school the next year, her language difficulties and lack of education in other subjects were not picked up by her intermediate school teacher until almost the end of her time there. Nadia would spend up to four hours per night with her father doing Maths to try and catch up and her sisters would read to her. This was a very difficult time in her life.

Nadia moved on to the local college. The school was streamed academically and Nadia was in one of the lower streams. She continued to study in the evening with her father but continued to dislike school and did not work hard. She was more interested in making friends and started to skip school.

At the end of year 10 one of her teachers identified her as having the potential to do Cambridge examinations (which at the school were only undertaken by students in the higher academic streams). Nadia does not know why she was chosen but she credits this as a significant factor in changing her attitude to school. She was moved up into a higher stream and surrounded by students who were more academically interested, and she began to work harder. Nadia was given a real boost when she received feedback about how well she had done in a difficult Chemistry test. She noted that the teachers treated these students differently – with less annoyance than in the lower streams - and that the students had goals and futures in mind. She made new friends, gained confidence, began to get involved in sports and did well in her studies, passing year 12 Cambridge exams and gaining University Entrance in the process.

In year 12 Nadia's father required her to wear a headscarf. Nadia was unhappy about this and was particularly affected when one of her friends said she would not be able to get a part time job while she was wearing a headscarf. To prove this wrong she applied and secured a job in a clothing store. Over the summer she decided she would not go back to school for year 13. She did not consider this to be "dropping out" as she already had University Entrance. Her parents were not happy as they had instilled in her that she must go to university and that it would not be sufficient to only do a bachelor's degree.

After working for a year Nadia applied for Pharmacy School. Because she had not done year 13, her grades were not sufficient for entry, unlike some of her friends who had completed year 13. Nadia felt regret that she had not gone back to school. She enrolled in a Bachelor of Science at a different university from City University.

Nadia began a Science degree but, although she passed the first semester, she hated it, and she did not return to university for the second semester but worked instead. At that time she was helping in the family business, was doing well in it and enjoying it, so she decided to do a Business degree. She was persuaded to go to City University by a friend who told her it was fun. By that time, her sisters were both at City University doing postgraduate study so her father, who had previously insisted she go to the university where she did Science, was more relaxed about her choice of university.

Nadia's sister completed all the enrolment forms for her and accidentally enrolled her in the Foundation Course in Business. While Nadia met the entry requirement for the Business degree, she nevertheless completed the Foundation Course in Business and now reflects that it set her up very well for the Business degree.

Nadia's experience of Business study is very different from Science. She loves it and found that everyday she could go home and discuss what she had learned with her parents. She likes that the lecturers are approachable and that there is a high level of engagement with other students. Nadia is in her second year of the degree and is majoring in International Business and Entrepreneurship. While it is a challenge to balance work and university, in part due to the values instilled by her father, Nadia always prioritises university.

As Nadia has progressed through her degree she has faced significant challenges in her family life. The family business began to decline and her father became ill and, sadly, died. Nadia helped her mother initially to run the business but subsequently they have had to close the business. Nadia hopes to use her knowledge to have her ideas accepted in her workplace, and ultimately to create a business that the family can count on.

Sam

Sam is 21 years old. He lives with his girlfriend in a flat on the same property as his mother, stepfather, two younger half siblings and grandmother. He has an older brother who has been through university and has four half siblings on his father's side. Sam's mother is Tongan and his father Fijian. His parents separated when he was young, and he was brought up by his mother. The family is religious, and Sam was taught Tongan values such as love, kindness, care, humbleness, respect, family first and strive to do your best. Sam's mother is a clinical nurse manager and she holds a university degree in Nursing.

Sam had a happy childhood growing up in a suburb of a large New Zealand city and really enjoyed the local primary school. Although his suburb was relatively diverse, the primary school was in a well-off area and was mostly New Zealand European students. Sam credits his time there as enabling him to be more used to hanging out with New Zealand Europeans than some of his friends are, but it also meant he didn't speak Tongan as much. Sam did well at primary school, was the star rugby player and school leader. He remembers it being fun and stress free.

In year 7 Sam went to an all boys school. This was a great school for Sam. He made a lot of life long friends and it taught him strong values. He did not do so well academically in year 7 but in year 8 he had a great teacher who Sam felt related well to the Pacific Island boys through his interactive teaching. Sam's grades improved significantly in year 8 and it showed him that if he put the work in, he could do well.

Because of his strong year 8 results Sam was put into one of the top three streams in year 9 and went on to do Cambridge exams in year 11. Most of Sam's friends were doing NCEA and, although there was a perception that NCEA was for the dumb guys and Cambridge for the bright guys, this gap was not a problem for Sam. He retained his friendships and made new friends in the Cambridge streams.

Sam did well in year 11 Cambridge but decided to switch to NCEA in year 12. He told the school this was because he preferred to do assignments during the year so that the result did not rest solely on an end of year high pressure exam situation. He had learned from his brother this was how university was structured and he wanted to prepare for that. He did well in year 12. He had high expectations of himself and took academic subjects such as English, History, Calculus, Economics and Accounting.

From year 7, Sam had aspired to be in the first fifteen rugby team and he achieved that in year 11. Some of his best memories were from rugby trips. In year 13 Sam became School Leader and continued in the first fifteen. There was a lot of pressure on him that year and the competing demands on Sam resulted in his grades and rugby slipping. Sam blames himself for not listening to advice from the Dean to address the academic side and he missed getting University Entrance at the end of year 13 by five credits.

At one point Sam had considered making a career from rugby but by year 13 he felt the rugby wasn't as good. His mother had always said that, if he wanted to get a good job, he needed a university degree. She was keen for him to do Medicine – her brother is a medical specialist and Sam's cousins have all gone into Medicine. However, Sam knew he didn't want to do that. He had taken Accounting and Economics at school and had heard Business pays well, so he decided to do Business.

When he did not get University Entrance, Sam approached the school to see if he could get the remaining credits he needed. He was able to do this and still enrol in the Business degree for semester one – albeit having missed the first week. Sam had considered going to another university because he felt it had a renowned brand, but decided that the interactive teaching and smaller classes at City University would benefit him.

Sam spent the first semester hanging out with friends who partied a lot and did not go to class. He failed the first semester and considered dropping out.

Sam got a job but, after two weeks, he reflected on the situation and concluded he did not want to be digging holes for the rest of his life so he gave university another go.

This time Sam stayed away from the friends who were partying and attended every class. He read a lot and asked questions. He had not told his mother about not getting University Entrance nor about failing semester one, as he did not want to disappoint her. Consequently, he felt huge pressure to pass - which he did.

Sam continued with his Business degree mostly passing, but failing a few papers here and there, and is now almost finished. He has managed to make up lost time through summer school. Sam is majoring in Accounting because he had done that at school. He didn't like it much at first but, now that he is more confident about it, he is starting to enjoy it.

Sam considers it is important to be happy in what he is doing. He is conscious that others may not have the same opportunities that he has and that, along with his experiences of failure, has motivated him not to give up when faced with obstacles. Sam found the last year fulfilling because he had put in so much hard work to get his results. He can see that he is getting to a point where his dreams and aspirations can become real, and he is starting to enjoy the role of being an Accountant.

Tom

Tom is 20 years old and New Zealand European. He is one of a close family of four children and is a twin. He has an older brother and sister. He grew up in a coastal town about one hour out of a major city and moved away from home to come to university. Tom's parents both left school at about age 15. Tom's father has a bricklaying business, and his mother returned to work after raising the children and is currently doing office administration.

Tom recalls his childhood as being a relatively typical “Kiwi childhood”. A lot of time was spent outdoors. The neighbourhood was safe without any extremes of wealth or poverty. Tom and his siblings were taught that they could make their own paths in life and, as long as they enjoyed what they did, their parents would be happy. They were also taught from an early age that you have to work hard to get what you want and they all had part-time jobs.

Tom enjoyed primary and intermediate school and did well but never really pushed himself academically. His parents never put pressure on him to achieve high grades. As Tom moved through primary school to year 7 and 8, he became more interested in developing as a leader and took part in some of the leadership opportunities that were available. He also was inspired by his sister’s achievements to aim for prizes at school, which he achieved.

Tom went on to the local state secondary school. Tom realised from being introduced to the head boy early in year 9 that he needed to do more than just achieve good grades and he thought it would be great to be head boy one day. With this at the back of his mind, Tom continued to take opportunities at secondary school to develop his leadership skills both within school and outside school. He joined the local youth council (which reports into the District Council on youth matters) when he was in year 10 and remained there until year 13, taking an unofficial leadership role. He was inspired by this to take on more leadership roles. From year 11 Tom set himself a goal of achieving at least merit in NCEA – in part inspired by his sister, who had achieved excellence at level 1.

Tom became Head Boy of the school in year 13. He had a busy year leading a number of initiatives. His main focus was on the extra-curricular activities associated with being Head Boy and his teachers, perhaps conscious of the extent of his involvement, did not push him academically.

In term 3 of year 13, the Careers Advisor, with whom Tom had a good relationship, urged him to step back from his extra-curricular activities and focus more on his grades. Tom took her advice and, from then on, achieved

excellence for every assessment he did. He finished year 13 being four credits short of an excellence endorsement for NCEA.

Tom's school had given the students a clear message that they needed to go to university to get a good job, and it had always been Tom's intention to go. He is the only one in his family to go to university. Tom wanted to make a change from small town life and some of the tall poppy syndrome he felt he had experienced in year 13, and decided to go to a different university from City University to do a degree in Business.

Tom applied for, and was successful in securing, an internship for the summer break before university started. His employer told him this was because of his drive and the leadership roles he had held. At the prompting of his employer, Tom checked out City University and decided to go there instead, largely because of the internship experience built into the degree.

Tom found the transition to university relatively easy. His experience of just missing out on the excellence endorsement for NCEA drove him to set a goal for himself of getting As. He felt confident he could achieve that because his experience in year 13 showed him that, when he put in the effort, he could get high grades. Tom liked the fact that, at university, the onus was on him to get the work done. He felt this gave him control of his own learning.

Tom was pleased to find that City University had small workshops as well as lectures because it made it easier to meet people. Originally, Tom had thought it was important to have a lot of friends, but his focus on study and work has left little time for socialising. He had also observed that partying and high grades did not generally go together, and his focus was on achieving high grades, so he avoided the party lifestyle. He has made a few good friends. Tom has continued to do a mixture of part-time and full-time work for the company where he did his initial internship. This is in order to get good experience and to supplement his student allowance, which is inadequate to live on.

Tom considers that his leadership experiences through his school years helped him develop interpersonal and organisational skills that are not taught at school but which are important for the workplace. These skills have also been useful in helping him organise and motivate others in groupwork so that his high grade average can be maintained.

Tom is in his third year and has achieved his goal of getting As. He is majoring in Marketing and Human Resource Management, as it is his ambition to own his own business and he feels these subjects will be useful for that. His parents are proud of him but do not see a need for him to do further study. At school, Tom was motivated by wanting to impress his parents, but now Tom motivates himself. Tom is looking forward to finishing study so he can focus on work and a work-life balance.

Zoe

Zoe is 19 years old and lives with her parents and younger brother. She lived in a couple of smaller cities and on the outskirts of the city before moving to her current place in the city. The family moved for job opportunities and because the support for her brother, who has cerebral palsy, was city based. Zoe's father is Chief Executive Officer of a not-for-profit organisation who has a tertiary qualification in marketing and management, and her mother is a qualified teacher. She is part Maori from her father's side and part New Zealand European. Growing up there was some Maori culture but not a lot, although her father is now researching more about his heritage. Zoe identifies as New Zealand Maori on official forms.

Zoe has happy memories of primary school. She remembers lots of fun and games and the artistic creations they made. She was an average student. There was a range of students at the school and Zoe had friends from various different ethnicities.

When she reached year 7, Zoe went to a Catholic year 7-13 girl's school. Although Zoe had been to church with her grandmother, she wasn't used to the extent to which religion played a part in school life. The first two years were fine although she was unwell during that time and missed a lot of school. By year 9 she was not enjoying school. The classes were large and she felt that there was not enough individual attention. The teachers would give instructions but would not give further help and left the students to it. Her friends further on in the school told her that, once she got to the higher levels, more support and attention was given, but Zoe felt that it should have been available all the way through. In year 9 her Maths began to go downhill and she had no confidence about learning.

Zoe's parents were aware that she was unhappy and not doing well but were not actively looking at other options. Her best friend had told her about the private school that she attended and Zoe thought it sounded amazing. Part way through the first term of year 10, Zoe put together a speech that she presented to her parents to persuade them to send her to the private school. The family attended the open day at the school, which she found friendly and exciting. Her parents quickly agreed to her going to the school and she moved.

Zoe liked the new school. She was placed in the same form room as her friend, got on well with the form teacher and had a good relationship with the Dean. The students were motivated and she liked the small classes and the one on one attention she got. Some classes were as small as four and Zoe felt that meant they could work through the material much more quickly, have time for more creative learning and it was less risky to ask questions.

Zoe undertook Cambridge examinations and passed all her subjects in year 11. However, when she got the results for her year 12 exams she had not passed any. She found this out just a few days before returning to school for year 13. Reflecting on why she did not do well in year 12, Zoe does not have a ready explanation. It did not help that she received zero for art even though 50% of the mark was based on a portfolio that she had completed. However the school did not follow up this apparent anomaly.

Zoe's parents were relaxed about whether she left school or went back, and, if anything, erred on the side of leaving school. This irked Zoe and she was determined to return. From an early age she had wanted to go to year 13. This came out of her frustration with seeing people she knew drop out of school and in her view, waste their potential.

Zoe re-enrolled in her year 12 subjects and took them at the same time as her year 13 subjects. She studied really hard as well as running the before-school programme, and being the school photographer and captain of the badminton team. In June she re-sat her year 12 exams and passed them all. She then continued with her year 13 subjects and passed them at the end of the year with a B average.

Part way through year 13, Zoe decided she wanted to do Business at university. This was inspired by her father being in business, and because she considered it to be a good platform for a career. She decided on City University because she had heard good things about it and that it was more practical. Zoe found the transition to university easy. She had covered some of the content at school. As well, because of the flexible way her time at school was structured, she was used to studying between breaks in classes and taking responsibility for her learning. While her friends at university found it weird to have so many breaks, for Zoe it was not different from what she was used to.

Although it can be challenging getting into the city for early classes and Zoe sometimes finds group work annoying, her experience at university has been positive. She made friends at Orientation when she was put with a group of other students who identified as Maori on enrolment and she has remained friends with them. Zoe ensures she attends all classes and can see how her learning is impacting on her everyday life. She attributes her Business learning to helping her negotiate a raise at her part-time job and her friends have commented on how her use of language has changed to include Business concepts. Zoe does not know what she wants to do yet – at the moment she is “chilling” but is focusing on passing her courses and enjoying

university. Her parents are very proud of her and encourage her in whatever she wants to do.

4.3 Comment on stories

The stories essentially set out the learning careers to date for the students, in that they record changing dispositions towards learning and the external influences that arose from their contexts and experiences. The stories demonstrate the individuality of each student and of their learning careers. Although some students share ethnicity, or similar cultural upbringings, no two students' contexts or educational journeys were the same. The students came from a range of backgrounds with some parents having been university educated, but most not. Their educational journeys differed with some going to the Business degree straight from school (Zoe, Tom and Sam), others working through foundation courses (Dinah, Eva, Lily and Aaron) and some changing degree courses part way through (Nadia, Daniel and Emma). By implication, all the students, by virtue of choosing to participate in the study, considered themselves to be successful, yet almost all experienced failure as well as success at different points along the way. Thus, the stories illustrate the complexity of influences on success (Harvey et al., 2006; Yorke & Longden, 2004) and provide examples to support the view that success should be considered more broadly than completion of a degree within a set period of time (Jones, 2008a; Quinn et al., 2005), as is the assumption that currently underpins university funding in New Zealand (Leach, 2016).

Despite the individuality of the stories, there were some commonalities. As discussed in Chapter 3, following development of the stories they were analysed for commonalities. The commonalities identified from that process are set out in Table 4.1, followed by a commentary about the commonalities. The commentary is brief because, as will be seen in the next chapter, the areas of commonality broadly correspond with the themes identified in the second stage of analysis, which are fully discussed in the next chapter.

Table 4.1 Commonalities between stories

Commonalities between stories (stage 1 of analysis)
View of education Internalised view of importance of education Education for vocational purpose Education as enjoyable/lifelong pursuit Able to identify behaviours to support learning
Family context Values, culture, economic Parental view of importance of education Parental involvement in education
Influence of school experience Academic confidence from school experience Recognition as a catalyst to learn Role of education system in success or failure
Decision making about university Enjoyment of subject Life experience Limited options Limited information
Support for learning Social/peer support Parental support Structure/teaching/support External factors

View of education and family context

All the students seemed to have internalised a view of the importance of education and the desire to go to university. This was engendered in different ways. All the students gained a view from their parents that education was important. For some students, such as Emma, Nadia, Sam and Daniel, there was an articulated expectation of, or enthusiasm for, progression to university. For others, there was a clearly articulated view of the importance of education coupled with some hesitancy about university – for example, Eva, whose father was keen for her to go but whose mother was not so keen, or Dinah, whose parents were not sure if she would cope with university. For Aaron, Tom and Zoe, while education was valued, attendance at university was not a priority. These students' desire to attend university came from other sources, such as Aaron's mission experience and Tom's school's influence. Lily's mother and grandparents instilled in her the importance of going to university, and, although her father was more ambivalent, she retained the determination

to attend that she had developed in her childhood in Thailand.

Influence of school experience

The students had all experienced some form of success in the schooling system. For some this was all the way through the system (e.g. Emma, Tom) but for others it was in secondary school (e.g. Nadia being selected for Cambridge exams; Dinah gaining level 1 NCEA). That these successes and failures formed part of each story suggests that they were seen by the students to be connected to their current state of being successful at university. This connection manifested itself in different ways, ranging from the confidence of knowing hard work would produce results (Tom, Sam) to a strong desire not to experience failure again (Eva).

Support for learning and decision making

Support was important for all the students. While the parents of the students had varying degrees of involvement in their education, and varying levels of knowledge of the education system to enable them to help their children navigate their way through, they were almost all supportive of their children's choices. In some cases the students' choices were limited by their academic results (e.g. Eva, Dinah, Aaron) and in others the students seemed to receive little information or guidance as to options (e.g. Daniel). For others, parents, older siblings, friends, and, in Tom's case, an employer were the source of information, with school seeming to play a significant role as a provider of information for the students.

As well, all the students (with the exception of Daniel) articulated, at some point in their story, the role of peer support or friendships in their success at, and enjoyment of, university. The students had also all got to a point, albeit at different stages, where they viewed themselves as responsible for their own learning and were aware of what behaviours contributed or otherwise to academic success.

This chapter set out the story of each student's learning career from which the presence of capital and the development of habitus can be inferred by the

reader. The next chapter addresses habitus and capital explicitly through a discussion of the themes identified in the re-analysis of data through the Bourdieusian lens. This chapter and the next chapter are complementary to each other with the commonalities identified in this chapter foreshadowing the themes which are discussed fully in the next chapter. The discussion in the next chapter delves more deeply into the learning careers traced in this chapter, in order to analyse the development of capital and habitus through that journey.

Chapter 5: Second Stage of Analysis - Findings and Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter set out the stories and discussed the commonalities between the stories that resulted from the first stage of analysis. The stories traced the students' learning careers in that they addressed context and student dispositions to learning at various stages in the educational process (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a).

This chapter builds on and complements the previous chapter by discussing the themes identified in the second phase of analysis. This stage involved re-analysing the transcripts through a Bourdieusian lens, preparing commentaries for each student based on that analysis and identifying themes. This was in order to more explicitly address the second research question, which had been partly addressed in the stories - *How do successful students explain their success?*, and to address the third research question - *How do theories explain the contribution of these prior experiences and contexts to the success of these students at City University?*

It was advantageous to have completed the stories prior to the second stage of analysis because I already had an understanding of connections between events for each student. This further phase of analysis enabled me to delve into the students' learning careers and focus on responses to key events, having already developed an understanding of how those events and responses fitted into the whole story for each student.

The commonalities identified through the first stage of analysis and set out in Chapter 4, and the themes identified through the second stage of analysis broadly corresponded. However, the themes identified in the second stage of analysis were more explicitly linked to Bourdieu's concepts, which were only implicit in the stories and areas of commonality between the stories. The commonalities identified in the first stage and the themes and sub-themes

identified in the second stage are set out in Table 5.1, with each grouped according to how they broadly correspond with each other.

Table 5.1 Summary of commonalities and themes identified

Commonalities between stories (stage 1 of analysis)	Themes from Bourdieusian lens (stage 2 of analysis)
View of education Internalised view of importance of education Education for vocational purpose Education as enjoyable/lifelong pursuit Able to identify behaviours to support learning	1. Possession of an educated habitus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - viewing learning as adding value to life - wide views of success - ability to articulate reasons for success
Family context Values, culture, economic Parental view of importance of education Parental involvement in education	2. Development of capital and habitus through support during school years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive parental view of education - parental emotional support for education - varying paths towards positive fit with school environment - changing role of peer influences at school to align with parental views
Influence of school experience Academic confidence from school experience Recognition as a catalyst to learn Role of education system in success or failure	3. Development of academic confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confidence built through success and recognition - varying impact of failure and setback on academic confidence
Decision making about university Enjoyment of subject Life experience Limited options Limited information	4. The role of social and academic capital in decision making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited social capital in sources of information - negative impact of lack of academic credentials
Support for learning Social/peer support Parental support Structure / teaching/support External factors	5. Role of habitus and capital in transition to university <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive fit with institutional culture - social capital – strong family support and peer support - limited impact of the role of economic capital

5.2 Student profiles

Before discussing each theme, it is useful to recap key features of the student profiles, as aspects of these are relevant to the discussion of capital later in the chapter. A summary of the profiles of the students in this study, showing school decile (a crude indicator of socio-economic status with 1 being low socio-economic and 10 being high socio-economic), ethnicity, parental education and occupation, is set out in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Summary of student profiles

Student	Age	Ethnicity	School Decile	Family education	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	Year of Business degree at time of interview
Aaron	22	Tongan	4 then 3	Father - polytechnic qualification Mother - polytechnic qualification Sister already at university	Healthcare worker	Automotive engineer - small business owner	1 st year
Daniel	21	NZ European	7	Father - secondary school Mother - secondary school	Sickness beneficiary	Bricklayer - small business owner	1 st year
Dinah	19	Samoa	8	Father - secondary school (Samoa) Mother - secondary school (Samoa) Sister already at university	Receptionist	Supervisor	1 st year
Emma	22	Maori/NZ European	4	Father - secondary school Mother - polytechnic qualification (nursing)	Medical sales	Small business owner	3 rd year
Eva	22	Samoa	2	Father - teaching qualification (Samoa) Mother - secondary school (Samoa)	Stay at home mother	Furniture manufacturing employee	2 nd year
Lily	25	Thai	4	Father - secondary school (Thailand) Mother - primary school (Thailand) Half sister already at polytechnic	Machinist in sewing factory (Thailand)	Plasterer - self employed	2 nd year
Nadia	21	North African	4	Father - undergraduate degree (North Africa) Began	Stay at home mother - assist in family	Small business owner	1 st year

				postgraduate certificate (NZ) Mother – no schooling Two older sisters undertaking postgraduate study	business		
Sam	21	Tongan	8	Step-father – Secondary school Mother – University Nursing qualification Older brother already at university	Nurse Manager	Truck driver	3 rd year
Tom	20	NZ European	8	Father – secondary school Mother – secondary school	Administration role	Bricklayer – small business owner	3 rd year
Zoe	19	Maori/NZ European	10	Father – undergraduate degree Mother – teaching qualification (Teacher's college)	Teacher	CEO of a not-for-profit organisation	2 nd year

As noted in Chapter 1, ethnicity and socio-economic status, rather than class is foregrounded in the New Zealand higher education literature. While most students in this study proffered their ethnicity unprompted, they were not asked about which class they felt they belonged to. This was not a question that I would have felt comfortable asking and I anticipate may have drawn some confused responses – a position that appears to be similar in Australia where at least one study found students could not identify with the concept of class (Laughland-Booÿ, Mayall, & Skrbiš, 2015). As such, the students have not been categorised into a class in the table above.

The lack of categorisation of the students into classes does not prevent comparison of behaviours and attitudes evidenced in this study with those in other studies where some similar behaviours and attitudes happen to be attributed to a class. People who are in similar positions with similar conditionings are more likely to have similar dispositions and engage in similar practices (Ingram, 2009). Therefore, in the context of this study, the focus was on identifying any similarities in conditioning, behaviours and attitudes, particularly as they relate to the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories. These concepts form the theoretical framework for the discussion of themes 2,3 and 4. In this chapter, the

discussion about how the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories apply in New Zealand is made with reference back to the context in which the concepts were developed – that is, the United Kingdom.

What the summary above does show is that the schools the students attended were spread across a range of deciles – from 2 to 10, with half the students at schools above decile 5 and half of them at schools below decile 5. There was also a range of parental occupations with a number of parents in administrative roles or small business owners, and only four of the 20 parents in roles which might be considered professional (medical sales, nurse manager, teacher and CEO). Despite the range of deciles, the students were largely first in their families to attend university, or were following closely behind siblings who were first in family to attend. While several of the parents had polytechnic qualifications, only three students (Sam, Nadia and Zoe) had parents who had been to university. Most of the students in this study could be considered to be non-traditional university students. Zoe and Sam were the only exceptions to this, in that they had at least one parent with a professional occupation and who had been to university.

Bourdieu argued that a person's practice or actions were a result of the interaction of their habitus and the capital they possessed within the field in which they found themselves (Bourdieu, 1984). The relevant field in this study is higher education in New Zealand, features of which were discussed in Chapter 1. This provides the wider context in which the success of the students in this study is considered, and is the context in which I, as the practitioner researcher, operate, and in which I can have some influence to effect change.

The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of each of the themes identified through the second stage of analysis.

5.3 Theme 1 – Possession of an educated habitus

Nash (2002) suggested that having an educated habitus supports success. In this section I argue that the students' views of learning and success and the explanations they had for that success evidenced an educated habitus.

Viewing learning as adding value to life and wide views of success

The students were able to articulate their views of success and learning and describe their behaviours at university that they thought led to their success. While some of the students stated that they were focused on getting a degree, they all expressed wider views of success than passing their papers at university, with views that included enjoyment, being able to apply knowledge, teach others and learn for the sake of it.

... the most important thing is applying whatever you've learnt.
Everything actually that you've learnt in the paper into the real life.
[Eva]

Just like feeling positive about the whole experience. Because if you're not it's not really a success if you're not feeling good about it. [Zoe]

That's what I mean by true success. Um just teach someone else so they can learn. [Aaron]

Being happy yeah. It's not about the end result. It's about the journey.
[Sam]

It is implicit in the above quotations that the students could see the relevance of education and perceived it as adding value to their lives in some way, whether through enjoyment or fulfilment. There was an absence of comments that suggested any of the students could not see any point in learning or had an unwillingness to be at university. The students also all expressed positive views about university. While this positivity might be expected in a study that

sought students who were successful, it cannot always be assumed that students who are succeeding by passing have a positive attitude. An example is Nadia who was successful in her first choice of programme (Science) in that she passed her courses, but who said she hated it and could not see the relevance of what she was learning, and she did not continue. That all the students expressed positivity about their learning at the time of the interviews is a relevant finding, both in terms of the contribution of their disposition to learning to their success, and their interpretation of what success at university meant - which was more than just passing courses.

Ability to articulate reasons for success

The students all identified behaviours that they felt had led to success and which indicated a positive response to their university education. These included attending class, participating in activities, surrounding themselves with like-minded friends, and avoiding negative influences.

That the students were able to refer to specific behaviours to explain their success at university further supports their positive attitudes to education, because they could articulate behaviours that aligned with and supported those attitudes. It can be inferred from this that the students had some confidence about education because they could make a link between particular behaviours and success. It was also interesting that, in identifying the behaviours that the students thought supported their success, several of the students said that they drew on what they had learned from past experiences. For example, Aaron said he learned the value of education and disciplined study habits while on his Mission in the Pacific Islands, and Sam, Emma and Tom referred to learning from school experience that hard work can bring academic success. Thus, the students were themselves making a link between their past experiences and their current success at university.

Discussion of Theme 1

The views of success expressed by the students align with soft outcomes, which focus on student perceptions of progress toward their own goals, rather

than hard outcomes, which focus on completion of a qualification within a set timeframe (Zepke & Leach, 2010). Their perceptions of success were wider than the view of success that underlies policy both in New Zealand (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Ministry of Education, 2014) and the United Kingdom (Jones, 2008), where funding policies imply that completion of qualifications within a certain time is success. It can be inferred from the fact that the students volunteered to take part in the study that they considered themselves to be successful (at least in the terms it was expressed in the invitation, which was that they be at least in their second semester of study), and their answers to the questions about success affirmed that view. However, five of the students had not achieved University Entrance on their first attempt, and five of the students may not have met the New Zealand Government policy measure of success at university because they either changed degrees and therefore failed to complete a qualification, or failed courses putting them at risk of not completing the qualification within a set time. Therefore, the students' views of success and the approach to success underlying policy did not align.

Despite their varying educational trajectories, at the point in their educational careers that the students in this study were interviewed, I have interpreted that they exhibited, through their narratives, the features of an educated habitus as defined by Nash (2002) in that at the time of the interviews all the students expressed confidence and a willingness to be educated in the areas they were studying, and all were able to articulate behaviours that they believed supported that outcome. Nash (2002) suggests that possessing an educated habitus may be an explanation for success at school, and it is reasonable to suggest that this might also apply in higher education.

This study builds on Nash's argument by adding perspectives from higher education. Nash (2002) identified that for secondary school students, possessing an educated habitus involved recognising the relevance of what was being learned – either for future use or to gain a qualification. The experiences of Nadia, Emma and Daniel, who changed programmes in which they were passing but were not enjoying what they were studying, showed

that a positive attitude to education in general was not enough to make them persist in learning about particular subjects they had no interest in or could see no future for themselves in pursuing. The voluntary nature of participation at university meant that they could discontinue attending – unlike school. None of the three students withdrew from university study permanently but instead they enrolled in a programme that they said they felt might be more useful for them. So, for some students in this study, the role of the relevance of what was being learned as a contributor to the willingness to be educated was highlighted, in part because participation in higher education is voluntary.

It is possibly not surprising that the students in this study described attitudes and behaviours consistent with an educated habitus, because the study sought to interview students who considered themselves successful, and such a habitus may explain success in education. While this may seem an obvious statement, the concept of educated habitus is still a useful one because it neatly encapsulates the set of dispositions and behaviours that contribute to that success. The more difficult question to answer, and the question that more directly addresses the research questions, is how did that habitus develop? The concept of learning careers developed by Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a) provides a framework to explore how that developed, and is one that acknowledges that the students may not always have manifested a positive disposition to learning, that this manifestation may have changed, and that it may have influenced, and have been influenced by, context and habitus.

In Themes 2, 3 and 4, I discuss how the students came to be in the position at the time of the interview of describing attitudes and behaviours consistent with an educated habitus. I do this through tracing their learning careers (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a) and identifying instances of interrupted trajectories (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013) and habitus tug (Ingram, 2011), together with their responses to these situations, which can result in transformation of habitus to align to the expectations of the new field (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013; Reay 2004) or by adapting and finding a third space, and so being able to move between fields (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2016; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010).

5.4 Theme 2 - Development of capital and habitus through support during school years

This theme includes both familial attitudes to education and the support the students talked about during their schooling from parents, friends and the school itself, which, I argue, helped build a form of cultural capital and encouraged the development of an educated habitus. Apart from some background context, my questions of the participants encouraged them to begin their narratives from their early schooling days. While parental attitudes to education were possibly conveyed to the students before they began their schooling, they have been included in this theme because it was through the narration of the students' schooling experiences that this sub-theme was most apparent.

Positive parental view of education and emotional support for education

The students' narratives, with a few exceptions, did not suggest significant social or cultural capital in the form of parental involvement in using social networks to find out about schools or seeking out any schooling options for their children other than the nearest state school. The exceptions were Emma, Zoe and Sam, all of whom talked of their parents investigating options outside the local state school. Most of the other students said they attended the nearest local school or, where there was a choice, the local state school where their siblings already attended.

In general (apart from the exceptions already noted), the students' narratives conveyed an impression of acceptance on the part of both the students and the parents that the school attended would be determined by physical address and zoning. That is not to suggest that this decision-making process was somehow flawed, but rather that it implied either a relaxed confidence in the New Zealand education system generally, such that any school would be adequate, or a lack of information about individual schools, or an awareness of lack of options because of financial constraints. Those students whose parental decision-making fell within that more relaxed approach also appeared quite comfortable with that decision-making and did not question it.

Similarly, parental involvement in decision making and helping the students with their schoolwork was largely absent from the narratives. Of those students who had a choice of which school qualification to pursue (NCEA or Cambridge Exams), only Emma talked about her parents being involved in that decision. Nadia was the only student who talked about parental help with schoolwork, other than Tom's reference to his early schooling years when his parents would make sure he had done his homework.

Some of the narratives did suggest the students' parents were not very familiar with the New Zealand education system – not surprising for those who were immigrants. Dinah referred to her parents “knowing about NCEA level 1” from which it can be inferred that this was something they knew about, as opposed to other areas of the system. This inference was reinforced by her describing that she had to explain to them how entrance to university worked, and how her options had changed because she had not achieved University Entrance. Eva's description of her father's interaction with the school system suggests that he also was not familiar with the New Zealand education system – she talked about him going up to school to give the teacher feedback, in respect of which she noted, “And I think he didn't know that he wasn't supposed to do that.”

While active parental involvement in education may not have come through strongly in the narratives, all the students talked about their parents having positive views about education. The three students who had parents who did go to university talked of quite different approaches by their respective parents. Sam said his mother “always thought of me as a very highly academic person” and instilled in him that he needed to go to university to get a good job. Nadia said her parents said not only that she must go to university but also that she must go on and do a Master's degree. In contrast, Zoe talked about her parents appearing to be ambivalent as to whether she continued to year 13 or not, after she failed year 12. For parents who had agreed to send their daughter to a private school, and in doing so had used their resources to make a strategic choice about their daughter's education,

this seems a puzzling stance. Zoe did not have any ready explanation as to why she failed year 12 but her parents' ultimatum that she had to work harder or leave school seems to suggest they felt she had not worked hard in year 12. One interpretation could be that, by encouraging her to leave school, they were calling her bluff. Her reaction suggests that she already had developed a positive disposition towards succeeding at school but perhaps she had not fully developed an educated habitus, as it did not appear to be manifesting itself in practices that allowed her to succeed.

Other students said their parents expressed views about the importance of education:

They [Aaron's parents] have strong views on education. I guess that's what because they came here as well. So they know education is key. It's a very powerful tool. [Aaron]

Because my parents always tell us that "always do well at school because education is key". And they don't want us to end up like what they had like they didn't complete high school and so they wanted a different situation with us. [Dinah]

Emma's, Daniel's and Lily's parents instilled in their children from an early age an expectation that he or she would go to university:

It wasn't really an option for me not to. Not like my parents forced me or anything but I was determined and they were determined for me because they didn't go. [Emma]

She [Daniel's mother] wanted us all to go to Uni. She wanted us to have \$60,000, \$70,000 jobs or salaries. [Daniel]

My mum she want me to study and have a good degree. Yeah because she knows.... She has hard life so she doesn't want me to have the not really good job. [Lily]

The importance of education articulated by the students, whose quotations appear above, had an underlying link to social mobility – all of these students had parents who did not go to university. Actual or imagined parental responses to different situations by the students appeared to reinforce the view of education as important. For example, Dinah and Eva both spoke of their awareness of their parents' expectations, with Dinah saying she did not want to disappoint them, and Eva saying she changed her behaviours at school out of fear of her father's reaction. Emma was nervous about her parents' reaction when she wanted to drop out of her first choice of programme and change to the Business degree, but she said they were supportive, and Nadia also said her father agreed that she should not continue with Science when she was not enjoying it. These reactions suggest that the parental attitudes to education were significantly influential on the students' own attitudes and behaviours towards developing an appreciation of the value of education.

Varying paths towards positive fit with school environment

The students' experiences of their schooling varied, with some talking of a continuous positive experience but others encountering new environments they found challenging, which suggests they were experiencing habitus tug.

Nadia, Eva and Lily recounted the difficulties they experienced upon arrival in New Zealand and going to school. Eva recalled changing, from being confident in her previous school environment in Samoa, to feeling bewildered:

Like everyone's there doing things that they usually do everyday in school. Because they're used to it. You're sitting here going "Gosh I've never felt so stupid." [Eva]

She said that she initially found the lack of discipline in classrooms

disconcerting, having come from a strict school environment where children were beaten, but she soon changed to become disruptive herself, which she said had a “huge negative impact” on her education. The pain of habitus tug is evident in the following quotation:

I think most of the things I knew that changed about me were not a good change. But it was just so much anger. Like having to learn all these new things. [Eva]

Nadia's story similarly suggested evidence of the pain of habitus tug, when she arrived in New Zealand unable to speak English and not having been to school. Lily too recounted emotions that suggested a habitus tug, saying that when she arrived in New Zealand it was not what she expected. She said she had done well at school in Thailand, and she recalled that she struggled at school in New Zealand, knowing the answers to questions but not being able to express them in English.

Zoe, who recalled having enjoyed primary school, said that she struggled with a number of things about the school she went to for her intermediate and early secondary years, including discomfort about the religious aspect of the school, dissatisfaction with the physical environment, and a view that the teachers gave insufficient attention to students. This suggests that the school was not meeting Zoe's expectations to enable her to advance her education in the way she desired. Zoe's response to this habitus tug was to take steps to distance herself from this particular field by persuading her parents to send her to a different school that she perceived would be a better fit for her.

Other students recounted a smoother journey through primary school. Emma and Tom recalled a relatively smooth passage all the way through school. Sam, who came from a Tongan speaking home but went to a primary school that was mostly New Zealand European, appeared to have adapted early on to move between fields:

So I was ...I came from an Island background so when I when I went to

that [primary] school it was like different. My English became better. So that's probably why like I can't speak much Tongan because I've been hanging around with a lot of white people and like some of my friends that are Islanders, it's really hard for them to hang out with some white people but when it comes to me it's more natural because I was brought up with a lot of white people. [Sam]

However, Sam seemed to regret his lack of fluency in spoken Tongan, his first language, and it could be argued that the loss of this was one of the hidden injuries of finding that third space or adaptability (Lehmann, 2014).

Although some of the students experienced periods of school where they encountered difficulties, with the exception of Nadia who had no primary school education, all the students spoke positively of their early schooling years (although Daniel went on to experience some frustration later in primary school). These positive memories were attributed to various factors including the social environment (e.g. Dinah, Sam), or the teachers (e.g. Aaron) or because they performed well academically (e.g. Tom, Lily, Emma and Eva) or just had fun because of the activities that were undertaken or they liked learning (e.g. Zoe, Daniel). While the reasons for the positive memories differed, the narratives suggested that early schooling years were an affirming experience for the students and that they had positive associations with the field of primary education. This may have helped reinforce the positive views of education coming from home and, ultimately, have contributed to an educated habitus and thus to success.

Changing role of peer influences at school to align with parental views

Some students who said that they had been comfortable at primary school, such as Aaron and Dinah, appeared to struggle to transition to secondary school. Dinah recalled feeling anxious about leaving her small school and going to a school without her friends. Rather than focus on academic work, she tried to be "cool":

Like I just hanged out with my friends and just went to the library and pretended to do some work but just played games on the computer. Um I think that's when I thought I was being cool like doing that type of stuff made me fit into another group and then I felt cool. [Dinah]

Dinah recalled ripping up her school report showing that she was failing so that her parents could not see it. Similarly, Aaron said he struggled to focus on his schoolwork when he moved to secondary school because he found the structure so different from his previous school. At this stage, while both Dinah and Aaron were gaining social capital in the form of friends, their recollections suggest their new-found social capital was at odds with the dispositions to learning they had experienced up until then. This is captured in the following quote from Aaron:

Because my parents always said education, education, education. Everything else is kind of an appendage to it, just to add more to your education. Um but my friends were always kicking a rugby ball, all the time. Like all the time. And then after school it was rugby, rugby, rugby, dinner, rugby, rugby, rugby. [Aaron]

Nadia also recalled her friends having a negative impact on her disposition towards learning when, in order to prove she could get a job despite having to wear a scarf, she decided not to return to year 13. She was clear in recounting her story that she knew she would go to university after that year, and that she thought things would be fine as she already had University Entrance. However, she said that, when she realised that her grades (unlike those of her friends who had gone back for year 13) would not be enough to get into her chosen course, she berated herself for being influenced by her friends to prove she could get a job. Again, the pain of habitus tug between her view of education and the influence of her peers is evident in the following quote:

And I would say "you're an idiot [Nadia]. It's because you listened to those girls and what they said to you". I always would reflect on it that

way. [Nadia]

The quotes from Dinah, Aaron and Nadia above all suggest an awareness of a clash between parental views of education and their behaviour and, with the benefit of hindsight, a level of dissatisfaction with those behaviours. This suggests habitus tug in that their behaviours were not aligning with parental expectations about education.

Tom, who was the only student whose story did not suggest any significant setbacks in his learning career, nevertheless also described experiences that suggested a form of habitus tug. This was not in terms of his learning but rather his perception that there was some jealousy of him amongst his fellow students because of his high profile as a result of his leadership activities. He said this was influential in his decision to move away from his hometown to go to university – a response which involved him distancing himself from his original field.

Other students, such as Emma and Zoe, spoke of supportive peers at secondary school who were academically focused. Eva talked about making new friends when she began working harder at school. Lily also spoke about having supportive friends at school, and the fact that her English meant she could not move forward with them was a factor in her decision to leave school. Only Daniel did not discuss peers at secondary school. Rather, his narrative focused more on the excellent teaching staff whom he found to be very supportive. With the exception of Daniel, the findings suggest that peers had an influence on the school experience for the students in this study, with some students experiencing a smooth progress through school with like-minded supportive peers, while others experienced conflict between the attitudes of their peers and the attitudes and expectations of their parents towards education. As will be seen in the next theme, which discusses successes and setbacks, for all of the students the attitudes and expectations of their parents eventually prevailed over those of their peers.

Discussion of Theme 2

The development of habitus begins with the family and familial attitudes as forms of capital are built up (Moore, 2012). Familial attitudes to, and involvement with, education are therefore an important starting point in the development of an educated habitus that can contribute to success at university. Statistics that predict success in the education system based on the qualification of the parents imply that those with a university education are able to provide advantages to their children that those without a university education cannot, and this is supported by research that argues that working class parents are less involved with the schooling of their children than middle class parents in the United Kingdom (Reay, 2000). Parental involvement in education through extra-curricular activities and communication between home and school where values are shared translates other forms of capital into educational capital and can support children's success at school (Warin, 2016).

Ball (2003) argued that the middle classes are adept at using their resources to make the most of opportunities in education, including choice of school, and are active in influencing education policy to their advantage. He argued that they construct their child as talented and reasonable and are vigilant about educational institutions and opportunities for their children, with options kept open and all possibilities for the child's best advancement considered. If this can be taken as a measure of "parental involvement", then few of the students in this study described this level of involvement.

The parental involvement in her education described by Emma, in terms of seeking out schools and involvement with key decisions in her education, had the most alignment with parenting behaviour that includes using social networks to inform educational choices (Ball & Vincent, 1998; Snee & Devine, 2014) and confidence in their ability (James, 2015). The involvement by Nadia's father in supplementing her learning also aligned with findings about middle class parents investing in their children's education to build cultural capital (Ball, 2003; Reay, 2000) .

The other students' narratives contained very little reference to either seeking out different schools, or parents helping with schoolwork or being involved in educational decisions. In the United Kingdom, it has been found that, for some working class parents, lack of involvement is not because they do not want to be involved but because they lack the familiarity with system, or are not confident (Reay, 1997; Snee & Devine, 2014) – they do not have the “self-certainty of middle class habitus” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.66). A similar lack of familiarity came through Dinah's narrative about her parents.

What was common to the students was that they all spoke of a perception that their parents valued education, albeit expressed in different ways. Bearing in mind that narratives involve sense-making on the part of the participant (Polkinghorne, 1988), I have interpreted it as significant that the students were readily able to offer a clear perception of the value their parents placed on education and were able to articulate how that was conveyed.

The findings of this study lend support to Reay's (2000) argument that, regardless of actual involvement in education, emotional support for the students can also build what she termed “emotional capital” (p.569).. For the students in this study, this emotional involvement either reinforced a clearly articulated view of the value of education, or the fact of the emotional involvement itself implied a view on the part of the parents about the importance of education.

Reay (2000) suggested that examination of parental involvement in education highlights a problem with Bourdieu's concepts of capital in that they are based on an assumption of middle class practices, which places primacy on educational success. This study supports that view. The relatively limited parental involvement in the students' education may have contributed to some of the students' paths to university being less linear (which will be discussed later in the chapter) and, therefore, by implication not meeting a standard of success, if success is defined as a seamless progression to university. Nevertheless, the parental support that was provided appeared to contribute to success in the sense that all the students did eventually make it to

university and considered themselves successful.

Bourdieu argued that, after family, early schooling years were influential on the development of capital and habitus, and that students who fitted with the expectations of the schooling system are viewed as having natural talent when, in reality, they were in possession of social capital. This could influence the way the students see themselves and their educational prospects (Bourdieu, 1976). He also argued that early memories had particular weight because habitus defends against change by filtering information that might challenge habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). With the exception of Nadia, who had no early schooling, the students had positive associations with their early schooling for varying reasons such as academic success or enjoyment of school, and this coupled with parental articulation of the value of education would, according to Bourdieu's argument, be significant in the development of their habitus to include a positive disposition towards education.

The students' narratives of their later school experiences varied from a relatively smooth passage, suggestive of a habitus in tune with the educational system (e.g. Emma) such as might be expected of a child with an educated habitus, to experiences of habitus tug reminiscent of those which might be expected of non-traditional students.

The narratives of Eva, Nadia and Lily, where they described their feelings when they moved to New Zealand, resonate with the description of "a fish out of water". The field to which they had moved was one in which none of them knew the "rules of the game". Lehmann (2014) argued that pain can arise from habitus tug, and this was evident in their words quoted in this chapter. Dinah's and Aaron's situations were less extreme, but both talked of the conflict they felt in their early years at secondary school between the views of friends at school and the parental expectations about education of which they were very aware. They also spoke of the satisfaction they felt once they reconciled the conflict and aligned their attitudes to learning with the expectations of their parents, and by implication their own internalised expectations, suggesting that an awareness of the importance of education

had become part of their habitus.

Unlike some of the literature from the United Kingdom, where habitus tug has been attributed to the challenges facing working class students fitting in with middle class university environments (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013), in this study habitus tug arose not out of differing class expectations but in some instances from significant adjustments to new ethnic cultures being required (e.g. Eva, Nadia and Lily) and in others where the students' social groups' views of education were in conflict with the views and expectations of their parents and of the school (e.g. Aaron and Dinah). This study contributes to this literature by demonstrating that while habitus tug can arise from differing class situations, it can also arise in a range of other situations including, at the macro level, differences between ethnic cultures, and, at the micro level, differences in the attitudes of peer groups within a school.

This study also builds on the literature by delving into the learning careers of the students to examine responses to habitus tug. Identification of situations of habitus tug and the response to that enables identification of when the messages students were receiving from home about the importance of education began to align with their disposition to learning, which Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) argued enables them to see themselves as successful educational subjects. This enables a better understanding of the habitus of each student. In this study the students ultimately described feelings that suggested that any habitus tug appeared to be resolved, suggesting that their habitus was one which inherently valued education.

While parental attitude and involvement in education, and the positive associations with early schooling years may seem distant in terms of time from the students' experiences at university, the findings in this study were that each of the students experienced these things positively and that each of the students ultimately discussed attitudes consistent with an educated habitus. While the reconciliation between attitudes to learning and parental and school expectations occurred at different points in the educational journey for each of the students, their views on learning at the time of the interviews

would suggest that for all of them it did occur at some point. Arguably this reconciliation supported the development of an educated habitus, which Nash (2002) suggests may contribute to the students' success. In that sense the parental views and school experiences (both early and later), which were positive towards education for the students in this study, appear to have contributed to the development of capital and the development of a habitus that supported success at university.

For some students such as Emma and Tom there was alignment between their dispositions to learning and parental expectations through their school years. For others, the concept of trajectory interruptions (Byrom, 2009) provides a useful means to identify events or circumstances that appeared to lead to a change in the student's dispositions towards learning and the impact on their academic confidence, which is a feature of an educated habitus (Nash, 2002). Theme 3, which discusses failures and setbacks, identifies these trajectory interruptions and the changes the students said resulted from these events.

5.5 Theme 3 – Development of academic confidence

While some students perceived their parents to have confidence in their academic ability, most of the students did not mention this, and Dinah recalled feeling the opposite. What did come through in all the narratives, however, was experiences of success at school, which some of the students said contributed to feeling more academic or increasing academic confidence. As well, several of the students suffered academic setbacks, and described different responses to those setbacks.

Confidence built through success and recognition

The examples of school experiences set out in Theme 2 show that the students' experiences of school varied from a relatively smooth and comfortable experience for some, to experiences which suggest a form of

habitus tug during their educational journey for others. What was common to all the narratives was that the students described experiencing some form of success at school. Students such as Emma and Tom, who recalled a positive attitude to school all the way through, also spoke of experiencing academic success from an early age. Daniel stated that, when he got to secondary school and got the one-on-one attention he was seeking, he started to succeed academically. Zoe also spoke of a more positive disposition towards school and re-gaining of confidence once she changed schools and received individual attention that she perceived as being necessary for her success. Lily said she experienced success at school in Thailand and, although she said she struggled with English, she felt that she was positively reinforced through awards at secondary school which gave her a taste of the confidence she had felt in Thailand. In this way these students either implied or explicitly stated a level of confidence.

Sam, Dinah, Aaron, Nadia and Eva expressed their dispositions to learning at times being either negative or not a priority, and their academic performance as not being good, but talked of ultimately a change in attitude which led to success and, explicitly or implicitly, to more academic confidence. For Aaron this change came in year 11 when he said that he decided to take his studies more seriously and he started to achieve well. For Sam it was in year 8 when he recalled being inspired by a teacher and decided to work harder, resulting in success, which he said taught him that if he put in the work he could get good results, and that subsequently he always set high standards for himself.

Both Eva and Dinah recounted that parental expectations and admonishment resulted in them changing their attitude to school and working harder. They spoke of the results of the change in their behaviours in positive terms and the affirmation they felt when they started to get recognised for their achievements:

And then the teacher starts to um respond to you so like they start to benefit... to reward you mostly. So then when that happens you're pushed out of that thinking like "Oh I've got to do this for my Dad". It

was now a thought for you. [Eva]

Nadia said a key event for her was being selected to do Cambridge exams and being put in a higher stream, which she found to be affirming and led to a change in attitude. She said that she found the attitudes of the teachers changed when she moved to a higher stream – they were more fun and less annoyed with the classes.

For these students, their decision to focus more on their schoolwork appeared to be a step towards reconciling the messages from home about education with their actions and away from the educational trajectory of their friends. Dinah, Nadia, Eva and Aaron spoke of peer groups in their early years of secondary school who were not interested in study. However, they all said that, when they changed their attitudes to studying at school, the change either aligned with a change in their peer groups' attitude so that it was consistent (Aaron) or they changed peer groups (Dinah, Eva and Nadia) to groups that had a similar attitude to schoolwork.

Eva's story suggests her response to a habitus tug where she had been distancing herself from her current field (school) changed to acceptance of that field. She appeared to be reinforced in that acceptance by the capital her acceptance enabled her to acquire in the form of recognition and reward, leading her to a realisation that she, too, could be a "more academic" person. Aaron and Nadia went through a similar process of changing dispositions towards learning and being positively reinforced about that change through the building of social capital in the form of like-minded friends, and cultural and symbolic capital in the form of acquiring academic credentials and recognition of their achievements.

Analysis of the data shows that, along with these students' change in their disposition to learning, there was development of social, cultural and symbolic capital that aligned more closely with what was being valued in the education system - social capital in the form of friends who were focused on learning, cultural capital in the form of academic success in the system, and symbolic

capital in the form of honour through academic or leadership rewards. Their stories suggest a growing understanding of the “rules of the game” and a growing academic confidence as they experienced success, which resulted in more positive attitudes towards school, reminiscent of their early experiences, but which for some of whom had been temporarily lost during their early secondary school years. These positive attitudes towards education were evident at the time the students were interviewed suggesting that despite setbacks, which will be discussed in the next section, the groundwork for a positive disposition to learning had been laid in the early years and reinforced by subsequent success.

Varying impact of failure and setback on academic confidence

With the exception of Tom, all the students discussed experiences of setback or failure, to which they responded in different ways. Two of the students (Eva and Dinah) who had made changes to align their dispositions to learning to meet the expectations of their parents and of the school, spoke of the negative impact failure to gain University Entrance in year 13 had on them. Dinah stated that it was “devastating” to find out that she had not gained University Entrance because she had not taken the right subjects. Eva said she was frustrated and angry when she failed English and as a result did not gain University Entrance, and she began to question her position in the education system. Interestingly, however, once Eva had made it to university, had succeeded in the Foundation Course in Business, but then once again encountered failure through failing a couple of Business degree courses, she recounted a different perception – one which was more in line with the recognition of the impact of events external to the learning environment recognised in the concept of learning careers (Bloomer, 2001; Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000a), in that she attributed the failure to the difficulties she was experiencing in the home environment where she was staying:

So I don't think it was the environment [at university] that failed me. It was what was going on at home. Which also taught me that.. everything that is around you all the time affects the way you...school I

guess. Affects the way you are educated.[Eva]

Of all the students' narratives, Dinah's and Eva's suggested that, at the time of finishing school and experiencing the setback of not achieving University Entrance, they had the least academic confidence. Dinah referred to herself more than once as being perceived as "not being the smart type" and said her parents did not expect her to be able to cope with university because she was not as smart as her sister. Eva referred several times to her English skills as being an issue and the issue that led to her not gaining University Entrance. Both these students recalled changing their attitudes to learning relatively well into the secondary school days and had only experienced success for a short time before encountering failure.

Dinah's and Eva's narratives suggest the development of a fragile academic confidence as a result of experiencing some success, which was dented by failure but slowly built up again through experiencing success in pre-degree programmes and the pride associated with getting into university:

..if you go to university it's like it makes everyone proud and they all look up to you. [Dinah]

When I got in I got so kind of proud and I thought oh my gosh university. Oh my gosh I must be so smart that I'm getting into university. [Eva]

By the time of the interview Eva expressed the view that despite her failures she was "starting to get her confidence back" to finish her degree.

Other students did not express the same level of devastation as Dinah and Eva when they encountered failure. Aaron, who recalled achieving well academically in years 11, 12 and part of 13, expressed his failure to gain University Entrance in a matter-of-fact way. However, by implication his story suggests he questioned his place in university education because he spoke of giving up on his aspiration to go to university and instead took a course in

Automotive Engineering because he was familiar with it from his father's work. He said that it was only after the experiences of his Mission in the Pacific Islands that he realised he could continue to learn successfully. This would suggest that at the time of his initial failure he did not have much academic confidence, but experiencing success in learning during his Mission helped restore it:

When I learned the new language I realised that gosh I can actually learn something new. Even though... because I kind of thought well I'm old now so I can't really learn anything new but that's not true. Yeah just put your mind to it. It's a cliché but it's true – put your mind to it.
[Aaron]

Like Aaron, Nadia's disposition to learning was also influenced by an experience external to an educational institution, that is, her working in the family business. She talked of experiencing a setback by not being able to enrol in her first choice of course and then withdrawing from Science because she hated it. However, she did not express a lack of confidence arising out of this experience, and she said she passed all her papers. Rather, she said she was not interested in the subject. Her experience outside university in the family business encouraged her to return to university:

I realised I had a lot of potential when it comes to um business and everyone around me tells me the same thing so maybe I'll just give it a go. And after that I did the foundation course at [City University] and I just loved it. Until this day I just love it. [Nadia]

Other students' narratives also suggested they had some academic confidence by the time they encountered failure. These students recounted experiences of success earlier in their schooling, which they had sustained for longer periods before experiencing failure. For example, Daniel recounted achieving well for most of his high school years and particularly well in maths once he had received the one-on-one attention he was seeking. In his narrative he recounted that he did not experience failure until the end of his

first year at university, and an analysis of his reaction to that failure suggested he maintained an underlying academic confidence. He stated that the problem lay with the paper that he failed because it tried to cover too much, and consistent with the view of learning for the sake of learning which he had expressed, and in contrast to the students whose failure caused them to question their place at university, he seemed quite relaxed about changing to a different degree because:

I had gained great amounts of information just from my first year at Engineering. I know how a bunch of stuff works now. That was really cool. [Daniel]

Zoe appeared to be relatively unfazed about failing year 12 and recounted in quite a matter-of-fact way that she simply combined her year 12 and year 13 classes and passed both in one year. Both Emma and Tom said that they were aware from an early age that they had natural ability and both talked of achieving well. Neither Tom nor Emma said that they experienced failure; however, the realisation almost at the end of her degree discussed by Emma, that the degree she was enrolled in was leading to a career she had no interest in, set her back in terms of time spent at university and financially because of the impact on her student loan. She did not express any strong emotion about this realisation, instead making a decision to change programmes. However, at the time of the interview she expressed that she was no longer motivated by enjoyment, but rather had a sort of dogged determination to get a degree because she had been at university for so long.

Sam also spoke about strong achievement at school through his secondary years, and implied an underlying academic confidence through his high expectations of himself and his choice of difficult subjects. His narrative suggested that he also seemed to take failure - initially in his case, failure to gain University Entrance - in his stride. Unlike Eva, who stated she was too angry about failing University Entrance to contact her school to find out her options, Sam said his response was to contact his school and find out how he could gain the extra credits he needed. Sam encountered failure again in his

first semester of university, and, although he said at the time he was stressed because he did not want to disappoint his mother, by the time of the interview his reflection was that his failures had contributed to resilience, which he felt ultimately helped him.

By the time all the students were interviewed they were at varying stages in their degrees, and their stories show they had taken different paths to get to that point with some having had interrupted trajectories. For some of the students this resulted in fluctuating levels of confidence, consistent with changing dispositions to learning in a learning career. At the time of the interviews, however, analysis of the data indicates the students did have academic confidence.

Building on the data discussed in Theme 2, where it was noted that all the students (with the exception of Nadia) had positive associations with their early schooling, analysis of the data in Theme 3 suggests that experiences of success at school contributed to academic confidence. This confidence appeared to be more resilient in those students who had experienced sustained success and less resilient in those students who had only recently re-experienced success, and this appeared to influence their responses to failure or setback. What was common between all the students was they continued their journey to higher education with their setbacks and failures having varying degrees of negative time impact, and, once in higher education, experienced success at some point once again. What this suggests is that the early positive associations, the parental articulation of the value of education, and the positive experiences of success were enduring and enough to overcome failure and setback for those students who experienced it.

Discussion of Theme 3

Confidence was a feature of the educated habitus described by Nash (2002). It could be said to be part of a disposition to be academic which, along with academic performance, constitutes academic capital, which in turn is a form of cultural capital (Naidoo, 2004).

The narratives of the students suggest that they developed varying levels of academic confidence over time, with those who had achieved at school early and consistently demonstrating more academic confidence than those such as Dinah and Eva, whose academic confidence appeared to be more fragile after experiencing negative trajectory interruptions in their secondary school years, and only achieving success again later in that period.

Most of the students' narratives did not align with findings that some middle class parents construct their children as being academically capable (Ball, 2003) or have significant confidence in the academic ability of their children (James, 2015). Nevertheless, the findings in this study support the view that success and recognition in academic achievement at school supports academic confidence, and the findings support the argument of Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) that alignment of habitus with parental and school expectations contributes to a habitus where the students view themselves as successful educational subjects.

Dispositions towards learning can change reflecting influences within and outside the educational environment (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a), and the concept of trajectory interruptions (Byrom, 2009) provides a means to identify some instances where those changes in disposition occur, which can sometimes lead to a transformation in habitus (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000a). The narratives of the students in this study show that some experienced such trajectory interruptions. Eva's and Lily's arrival in a new country resulted in a habitus tug and loss of academic confidence that, in both cases, took time and success to recover. The expectations of Aaron's and Dinah's social groups in the early secondary schooling years resulted in a trajectory that was in conflict with their parental expectations. Their subsequent experiences - Aaron's Mission and Dinah's change in attitude at school resulting in some success - were further trajectory interruptions that put them on a path that aligned with their family values. Similarly, Nadia's defining moment, when she said she was chosen from the lower streams to do the Cambridge exams normally reserved for higher stream students, set her on a trajectory where she said she changed her attitude to schoolwork, began to achieve and

surround herself with like-minded friends.

Some of the trajectory interruptions identified in the narratives in this study were positive and others were negative. The students who experienced such trajectory interruptions were able to articulate how they felt about learning as a result, with frustration, anger, or feeling conflicted turning to feeling encouraged, affirmed, positive and growing in confidence when they began to experience success.

The narratives support Bloomer & Hodkinson's (2000a) contention that dispositions to learning can change over time and are influenced by past events and current circumstances that can be external to the learning environment. Some of the narratives also support Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000a) suggestion that learning careers can transform and be transformed by habitus, thus illustrating that habitus is malleable (Reay, 2004). Aaron's narrative is an example. His dispositions to learning varied over his learning career, although he appeared to have a habitus in which education was seen as valuable. He was comfortable when his disposition to learning aligned with parental values, but it was during his Mission that he said he really understood that learning was a lifelong process. Arguably, therefore, his habitus at school, which supported him to transform from a student who played rugby, rather than study, to a student who studied well, was further developed in the Mission component of his learning career where his experience led him to view education more than just a valuable means to an end but as something to be pursued for the sake of it.

Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) argued that, where a non-traditional student has experienced habitus tug but has accepted the messages about the value of education from home and school and aligned their behaviour with those expectations, the experience of failure can be devastating. They argued that this is because students get caught up in a discourse that success in education is attributable to individual effort in a level playing field. Dinah's and Eva's stories suggested that they experienced that devastation, and in both instances the lack of a level playing field could be seen – Dinah, through what

appeared to be a lack of advice about which subjects counted for University Entrance, and Eva, through a lack of understanding that she could return to school to gain the extra credits she had missed for University Entrance, an understanding that Sam did possess and as a result he was able to enter the Business degree a full 18 months more quickly than Eva.

While Eva's and Dinah's stories align with the arguments made by Byrom and Lightfoot (2013), that failure can be devastating for working class students, this study adds a nuance to the arguments advanced by Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) in respect of non-traditional students. That is, the findings in this study also suggest that the more fragile the academic confidence of the student, the more devastating failure was for them. In this study, in considering student responses to failure, whether the students were non-traditional was less relevant than the extent to which their academic confidence was fragile or strong. For most of the students in this study, stronger academic confidence had arisen through early and consistent positive associations with school, and recovery from any negative trajectory interruptions early in the secondary school years. The level of devastation for those with more fragile academic confidence could be because the students had only recently acquired academic capital in a field where academic capital was key. The combination of fragile academic confidence and missing out on a key academic credential needed to progress to university may have had a greater impact than for those students with more academic capital in the form of academic confidence, and in Sam's case the knowledge of the system, which enabled him to overcome that barrier in a short time.

The analysis of the data also suggests that, while some of the students' dispositions to learning varied over their learning career, success at academic endeavours built confidence, and that, while interruptions to their trajectories in some instances dented that confidence, by the time all of them enrolled in the Business degree their stories suggested that they had had sufficient success, whether at school or post school, to be confident enough to engage in degree study. While for some of the students their trajectory to degree study was far from linear, the intervening experiences seemed to help build

their academic capital through both the attainment of the necessary credentials for university study and through the building of confidence.

What this suggests is that, while a solid level of achievement at school can build academic capital that supports success at university, failure to amass that capital in the school system is not the end of the matter. Life experiences or pre-degree study can help students develop the academic capital needed to succeed at university. The findings of this study support both the usefulness of City University's pre-degree Business programme and its policy of open entry, enabling students who have attained 20 years of age to enter the degree. That is not to say that all students who are 20 but do not have University Entrance will have had the life or further educational experiences to succeed in the Business degree, but the experiences of some of the students in this study suggest that providing that flexibility contributes to widening participation through providing an opportunity for such students that would not otherwise exist.

5.6 Theme 4 – Decision-making about university

Limited social capital in sources of information

The students' responses in this study to questions about their decision making and expectations about university suggested that they mostly did not draw on social or cultural capital in the form of family connections for information, and that they lacked detailed information about the higher education system in general and individual university cultures in particular. Dinah was a case in point. When asked about whether university was what she was expecting, she responded that she watched a lot of movies like High School Musical and she thought it would be like that. She also referred to the movie Pitch Perfect:

And um I just thought it was going to be a lot of partying and like hangout with friends and like yeah. Like have you seen Pitch Perfect? I thought it was like that. [Dinah]

This was perhaps at the extreme end in terms of the students' expressions of what they were expecting university to be like, but in general the students did not articulate an in-depth decision-making process about university. Some of the students mentioned that representatives from various universities had come to their schools, and Eva mentioned going with her school to visit two other universities and feeling quite overwhelmed by the thought of going to university.

Students can apply to City University online and there is no interview process, so for some students the beginning of the semester is the first time they have physically been to the campus. None of the students mentioned having been to the campus before they enrolled, other than Tom who said he visited the campus to get more information on the recommendation of his employer. Up until then Tom had not heard of City University. Although living in the same city as the City University campus for a number of years, Zoe did not know where it was when she made her decision to enrol.

Other students said they were unaware of how the Business degree was structured and delivered, and they were not expecting smaller class involvement:

I didn't expect that there would be workshops. I thought it would just be lecture based. Um but workshops. Very helpful. [Aaron].

Nadia was the only student who said her parents influenced her choice of university. She said her father's view of which university she should go to was based on the fact her sisters had already gone to another university and "set the standard that [the other] university was better". However, Nadia said that this view later changed when her sisters moved to City University.

Sam and Lily were the only other students who alluded to status of universities in their interviews. Sam conveyed the most awareness of what to expect, and that he considered another university (which is more highly ranked on national and international rankings) as having higher status:

Actually I was intended to go to [Other] Uni because it was the more renowned brand. And then when it got to signing up I was like “Wait let’s just think about this. How am I... which uni will I benefit the most from?” and I thought [City University] would probably be the best, smaller classes and stuff like that. [Sam]

In contrast to Sam, when considering the same two universities, Lily appeared to be unaware of difference in status, with the following quotation suggesting she saw the two universities as equal in status:

Um one of the main points is that City University and [Other University] – they are quite well-known universities. And I think that [City University] had like...will be the university that can support me to get through the degree. [Lily]

This is perhaps the closest any of the students came to inferring that they did not feel that their “academic place” (Reay, Davies, et al., 2001) was at the other university, which has higher selection criteria and brands itself as New Zealand’s leading university. Unlike some of the other students who made quick decisions, Lily conveyed an impression that she put a greater degree of thought and planning into the educational decisions she made, but she also conveyed that her lack of English was consistently a barrier to her being accepted for degree study. Her journey differed from the other students in that she identified that she wanted to do a Business degree early on in her education, and she worked towards that, enrolling in different courses until her English was at a level that enabled her to enrol in Business degree study.

The sources of information about university that the students referred to in the interviews were limited, with school career counsellors or teachers, and friends being two key sources. Daniel responded to a flyer he found in a classroom; Eva enrolled in the first course she could find when she failed to get University Entrance and ultimately ended up at City University, and Aaron applied to City University and one other university and enrolled into where he

was accepted. Dinah made a quick decision based on her Employment teacher's suggestion:

So then she looked for [City University] and then she goes oh um why can't you do the pre-degree. And I say "what's that?" and she says "Certificate" and then I was like oh... I need to go... And then I talked to my parents that night. [Dinah]

Zoe was the only student who referred to parental social networks as a source of information. She stated that, as well as having friends who had gone to City University and enjoyed it, a friend of the family who was in recruitment suggested that City University was viewed favourably by employers. None of the other students discussed the use of parental social networks as a source of information for their decision making about university.

Peers were not mentioned as an influence on choice of course. Daniel appeared to be an exception to this in that he suggested he was initially influenced towards Engineering and away from Business because his girlfriend did not want to be with a "boring accountant" – thus being directly influenced. However, no other students suggested that they were influenced in their choice of course by their peers. Rather, an analysis of the data suggested that, for some students, family involvement in business played a part in the decision to do the Business degree – a recognised influence (Brooks, 2008). Tom and Zoe said they were influenced to do a business degree in part by their parents being in business, and Nadia was influenced by her experience in the family business.

Other students referred to their perception that a Business degree would lead to a good job and enjoyment of subjects at school as being influential in their choice of degree:

It's probably because I did business papers in high school so I was more familiar with that kind of work and plus I heard that it was a

money factor as well. So if you get a degree you get a good job in business. You get paid well. [Sam]

I liked Business Studies and I thought let's do a Business degree. And then I decided later on what actual majors I should do [Emma]

The overall impression is that the decision making that led to enrolment at City University in the Business degree was not based on consideration of a range of options. Rather, decisions appeared to be made quickly and were influenced by what the students already knew about business from school or parents, and in response to suggestions by individual teachers or others about enrolling in City University. Other than Sam, who appeared to have some awareness of the differences between City University and other universities, and Lily, who said she made a conscious choice to go to City University because she thought she would get more support there, the other students seemed to take a relaxed view of the decision-making and enrolment process. An example of this was Nadia who was eligible to enrol straight into the Business degree but said her sister accidentally enrolled her into the pre-degree course, which she then completed. Dinah did not suggest that she sought out any other options after her teacher had mentioned the City University pre-degree course. Other than Sam and Lily, and Tom at the prompting of his employer, none of the other students talked about finding out about other universities and making a decision based on all the information they had available. Analysis of the data also suggests that the information in schools played a significant role in the decision-making process, both from the perspective of the provision of information (e.g. for Dinah and Daniel) and from the perspective of lack of information (e.g. for Tom who had never heard of City University, suggesting a complete lack of information about it at his school).

Negative impact of lack of academic credentials

Higher education choices can also be constrained by lack of academic credentials (Reay, Davies, et al., 2001), and this was the case for several of the students. Some students said their failure to gain University Entrance

meant they had to change plans quickly. Aaron said he went into Automotive Engineering because it was what he knew from his father's business. He later made an immediate decision to take a place on the Business degree after he had been turned down at another university and had not enjoyed his first week of Science, which he said led him to panic. Eva said she initially enrolled in a course at a local polytechnic because, having missed University Entrance, she felt she was not ready to go to work and was seeking something similar to school. Dinah was unable to enrol in the communications course she wanted to do, so did the pre-degree Business course instead. Lily said she had a consistent goal of enrolling in a business degree, but she took several years to achieve that goal because her English was not of a standard that would enable her to enrol.

The experiences of the students in this study show the significance of the University Entrance qualification as an academic credential that can be an inflexible barrier to higher education. This is illustrated by the contrasting experiences of Sam and Eva, who both initially missed the qualification by just a few credits (out of the 80 needed). Sam's experiences showed that it was relatively straightforward for him to attain the extra credits needed, and he progressed directly to degree study. Eva who, from her story, appeared to have achieved to about the same level as Sam at the end of year 13, said she was not aware she could go back and try for the extra credits, and she appeared to have no-one to advise her on how to proceed. The result was that she spent 18 months getting to the same point that Sam was able to get to within a matter of weeks. Such a scenario highlights the "line in the sand" nature of the qualification, which allows entry for those students with it and a barrier for those students without it, even if the difference in their academic performance was as little as two or three credits. The magnitude of this barrier is reflected in the impact it had on the decision-making of the students who failed to achieve it, which appeared to be compounded by lack of information and advice as to the best way to proceed to their goal.

Discussion of Theme 4

The source of information for the students in this study was mostly school,

rather than parental social networks. In this respect, the students' experiences aligned with those of lower socio-economic students in both New Zealand (Boyd, Chalmers, & Kumekawa, 2001), and non-traditional students in the United Kingdom (Bathmaker et al., 2016; Reay et al., 2009), who have been found to get information from schools, rather than the family networks attributed to middle class students, built up over time, which not only add to cultural capital but also provide an important source of information about reputations of universities (Brooks, 2008). Dinah's story aligned with non-traditional students who have limited sources of information from social networks and, as a result, are less able to contextualise it and are more likely to be influenced by a single personal recommendation (Reay et al., 2005), in that she appeared to make an immediate decision on the advice of her teacher.

The data show that the students did not draw significantly on social capital in the form of peer networks in terms of their choice of course. It has been argued that peers do not generally have a direct impact on higher education decisions (Reay et al., 2005), but that peer perceptions of academic ability may influence students' own perceptions of their place in the higher education system, and the type of university that may be suitable for them (Brooks, 2008). With the exception of Daniel, whose girlfriend had an influence on choice of course, none of the students mentioned any role of their peers in influencing any decisions about choice of course at university.

Analysis of the data shows that almost all the students and their families came within Ball's (2002) definition of contingent choosers – that is, from families with little experience of higher education and who were not aware of the fine distinctions and status differences between institutions. This was evident in Dinah's story, where she recalled that she explained to her parents that she had to leave her home town and enrol in the Foundation Business course at City University because that was the only place that she could do it. Dinah was not actually correct about that, but she did not appear to be aware of that, and she said her parents accepted her explanation.

Nadia was the only student who expressed parental expectations about which university to attend based on reputation (Reay, Davies, et al., 2001), but even then it did not seem to be based on the family drawing on its own cultural capital and knowledge of league tables or reputation (Brooks, 2008). This suggests that Nadia's family were also contingent choosers (Ball, 2002).

Most of the students in this study could be represented in different elements of Hodgkinson and Sparkes' (1997) theory of pragmatically rational decision making, where decisions are pragmatic, based on partial information, opportunistic, or based on fortuitous encounters and involve accepting one option rather than choosing between many.

Seven of the ten students lived in the same city as City University, and none of those students mentioned any consideration of university options in other parts of the country. Eva talked about the logistical issues that she had to overcome in order to be able to attend university in a city that was away from her home town. In addition to financial issues, these included the requirement that she was not allowed to live in a university hostel because her parents were wary of the student life. Instead they required her to live with a family that belonged to the same church network as her own family. She expressed frustration that, having encouraged her to get so far at school, her parents' view was that her "Christian life is more precious than university or education." In navigating these hurdles, Eva's story demonstrated that, for her, going to university and the logistics she had to work through to get there differentiated her from traditional students, who take for granted the intricacies of choice in getting to university (Reay, 1998).

Lack of academic credentials, which are a form of cultural capital (Naidoo, 2004), also inhibited some decision-making. Lack of University Entrance was a barrier for some students, even where their academic performance appeared to be relatively similar, and this barrier was compounded by lack of information, at least in the case of Eva. Eva's case in particular resonates with the argument of the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2017) that University Entrance as a qualification may do more harm than good, because

failure to achieve it at school may dissuade students from applying to universities when in fact most universities have bridging programmes. Had Eva known that she could have applied straight away to City University's Foundation Business programme as Dinah did, she would have been able to attain her goal of getting to university a year earlier.

The perception that the students might feel out of place at university did not form part of the narratives of the students in this study, with the only hint of this being by Lily, who implied that City University might be a better place for her because she perceived it to be more academically supportive. Bourdieu (1984) argued that dominated agents adjust their expectations to their chances and refuse what they are refused, encapsulated in the expression "That's not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 473). This was not apparent in this study. Research in the United Kingdom about student decision-making for higher education suggests that non-traditional students are put off applying for elite universities because they perceive they will not find other people like them at those universities (Reay, Davies, et al., 2001). As a result, they are more likely to end up at post-1992 universities, which are more likely to have easier access and diverse student populations (Reay et al., 2010).

It would be speculative to suggest that a reason for the lack of apprehension by the students, about whether they would feel comfortable at City University, might be that there is not such a significant divide in New Zealand universities between elite and other universities, and such a finding would be outside the scope of this study. That said, City University is a new university and may be more likely to be viewed as aligned with post-1992 universities in England, not only because of its youth and national and international rankings, but also because of degrees such as the Business degree, which have no selection criteria and a diverse student population.

A less speculative reason for the lack of apprehension could be that the students in this study did not convey the same level of knowledge, experience and understanding about university rankings, visits to university and

awareness of the type of students enrolling in particular universities, which is apparent in some of the work in this area (Brooks, 2003; Reay, Davies, et al., 2001; Watts, 2009). Like this study, Brooks' (2003) study also found that, apart from some academic concerns, the anticipation of feeling out of place was absent from her interviews of middle class, but first in family, students. While there was a similarity between this study and Brooks' study in the finding about lack of concern about institutional fit, the significant difference between the two studies was that most of the students in Brooks' (2003) study articulated more knowledge and understanding of the sector and individual universities than was articulated by most of the students in this study.

In that respect, the findings do not seem to be adequately explained by Bourdieu's (1984) argument that individuals adjust their expectations downwards to fit their realistic prospects. Rather, the apparent lack of information discussed by the students in this study about higher education in general was such that comparisons between universities, in terms of university culture, did not even appear to enter into consideration, and the students did not appear to turn their minds to whether they would fit with the culture of the university. Although the findings in this study are in contrast to findings in other contexts (e.g. Brooks, 2003; Reay, Davies, et al., 2001), in terms of the level of information upon which decisions were based, as the discussion in the next theme will show, this lack of information did not appear to have adverse consequences as the students in this study did express a comfortableness with their fit with the institution once they got there.

5.7 Theme 5 - Role of habitus and capital in transition to university

This theme has a focus on the students' experiences once they had begun the Business degree.

Positive fit with institutional culture

Consistent with the lack of expressed concern about whether City University was the right place for them, all the students at the time of the interview

expressed a positive view about City University as an institution and the structure of the Business degree as being helpful for them:

University is a good experience. I really like it, the environment um teachers, people. [Lily]

I walk into [City University] and it's fresh and it's beautiful and the buzz of people is exciting and I feel I want to learn things and go places... It's just the feel of the university. [Daniel]

I think it's mainly because of the way everything is set out. Um I just think that you've got room for every assignment, you've got room for exam, to study for exams. It's perfect. I think it's done perfectly to be honest. [Nadia]

I liked [City University]. I liked the facilities and the kind of staff and the support and maybe because it's a bit smaller you feel like you have a bit...it feels a bit more intimate. Yeah no I really liked it. I still love it here. [Emma]

The finding that all the students expressed a positive fit with the university environment is interesting for two reasons. The first is that the students were from diverse backgrounds, both in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic factors, but that diversity appeared to have been accommodated. The second reason is because, as noted in the discussion of the last theme, other than Sam and Lily, the students did not talk about seeking out information about the culture of City University or the Business degree and how it was taught, or where they thought they might fit in best. Rather, their decisions to attend City University appeared to be more fortuitous or spontaneous. Yet despite this, they all conveyed that they liked the environment, albeit for different reasons. It is impossible to know whether they would have felt equally at home in another university, but the quotations above imply that, for these students, the people and the sense of support was important for them.

However, not all the students told of a smooth transition to City University. Dinah and Eva both said they found it difficult living away from home for the first time. Dinah said she was used to a small family environment, and that she found her relatives' large family environment noisy, yet at the same time lonely because she was used to sharing a room with her sister. However, Dinah said that, by the time she had finished the Foundation Course in Business and her parents wanted her to return to her home town to go to university there, she had grown used to the environment at City University and wanted to stay.

Eva said she also found the adjustment in living arrangements difficult, and for her it impacted on her learning career. She said that, although she was encouraged by good results in her first year, in her second year she tried to avoid going home because of the fighting between her aunt and uncle, and she found it hard living away from home. In a form of *habitus tug*, Eva said she did not want to tell her parents about the situation in case they made her leave university and go home. Her story suggests that, through a combination of her reluctance to distance herself from her new situation and parental support to bring her discomfort about the fighting to the attention of her relatives, she managed to find the third space that enabled her to move between the two environments.

The challenges identified by some students and the easier transition experienced by others show that previous experience can assist or hinder transition. For both Eva and Dinah, the challenges of transition to university arose externally to the institution through their living environments. They both conveyed in their interviews that they came from close families with protective parents, who were anxious about them moving away from home, and it was in this area rather than the university itself where they said they faced the most challenges. Only Aaron and Sam said they found anything about the internal institutional environment initially challenging. When asked about challenges in coming to university, Aaron said that he initially found the scale of the university daunting. Sam did not express discomfort with the university environment but said that he found the lack of structure at university

distracting and that, as a continuation of the attitude he had had at school the previous year, he and his friends did not attend classes regularly in his first semester. He said that reflecting during the semester break led him to change these behaviours for the next semester and concentrate on passing. Zoe, on the other hand, said she had come from a school that had a relatively unstructured environment and that as a result she found the transition to university easy.

Social capital – strong peer and family support

Peer support

Peer support featured in a number of the students' narratives, as did opportunities to meet people in the early days of university. Emma was the only student who mentioned a concern about disparity of wealth amongst students, but this was in relation to the first programme she undertook, where she said a number of students had gone to private schools. However, she did not express this as being an ongoing concern but instead implied that, in her view, academic achievement levelled the economic playing field:

But it wasn't a huge deal for me. Like a lot of them displayed their wealth quite well. They had all the kind of bells and whistles. But no it wasn't...it wasn't terrible. It was level playing field at that point because we all started together. Nobody knew who anyone was. And if you did the work you did better than the next one. [Emma]

Emma commented that the demographic of the Business degree was different from that of the first programme she was enrolled in. Although based only on Emma's narrative, her experience suggests that it is possible for different cultures to exist within one university, differing from programme to programme. Emma talked about how different she found the Business degree, but that she had reconciled herself to that:

It's so different. I have no friends in Business at all. Nobody talks to each other. Oh I've made a couple of friends but only just recently. But everyone just sits there and they don't talk to each other and you just do the work. Which I don't mind. I don't get distracted I don't think. It makes it harder to get up in the morning and go to class when you know you're just going to be sitting there. I used to have so much fun in [first programme]. But yeah no it's good. It's very different but it's good. [Emma]

In contrast, most of the other students apart from Daniel referred to having made friends and the role they played. It is possible that, because Emma entered into the Business degree late and would have received credit for some of the early courses that all students take, her opportunities for meeting people were fewer. The role of supportive friends, who were like-minded in the sense that they wanted to pass and get a degree, was mentioned by several students as being a reason for their success at university:

I think just yeah surrounding myself with good people. I'm very grateful and very... very lucky that the teams I have been placed into are like-minded. Everyone's ambitious to graduate and to graduate well rather than just scraping by. [Aaron]

And also like my friends. They always help me. They're always like "No, Dinah, put your phone away and study." I need that. [Dinah]

So um beside turning up to class all the time I think I took Dad's advice of surrounding yourself with the right people. [Eva]

I can support friends ah I can help them how to get answer, even help them like you know, we learn from each other as well and feel better and feel have more confidence in study. [Lily]

Some of the students also talked about the opportunities they had to meet other students and from which friendships were formed. Three of the students

mentioned Orientation, which took place the week before classes started, as being a positive introduction. Dinah said she was inspired by the Vice Chancellor's speech at Orientation to think, "You know what, I should do this." Zoe and Aaron said they found Orientation useful for meeting people, and Zoe said she remained friends with the people she met on the first day. Dinah also mentioned that the number of Samoan students in her class was a positive factor for her:

And when um class started um I realised that the majority of the class was just Samoan. Like the whole class was basically Samoan. So then I was like hey this is actually quite cool. [Dinah]

It was interesting that, although almost all the students referred to the role their peers played in supporting them at university, either academically or emotionally, only Eva said that she used the formal university student support structures. She said she attended Peer Assisted Study Sessions, which are small group sessions designed to support students academically and enable them to meet others, and she said she found them useful. Although some of the other students were specifically asked if they attended these sessions or equivalent sessions tailored for Maori and Pacific students, none of them did. Therefore, the findings in this study were much stronger in terms of the role of informal peer support, both academically and emotionally, than they were about the role of formal student services in such support.

Family support

Parental support that aligned with the students' learning dispositions while at university was expressed as being something that was helpful for some of the students, reflecting the importance of emotional support (Reay, 2000) and alignment between messages from home and the students' dispositions to learning (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013). Emma and Nadia's stories suggested that this support was important for them at times when they realised they had made the wrong decision about which course to do:

I thought they were going to go nuts. But I presented my mum with a plan so I was going to apply for Business. I explained to her what I was wanting to do with it. Like how...how it's all going to work and how much I hated what I was doing. And she said... she was fine with it. I was very surprised. [Emma]

However, two of the students expressed views that suggested a habitus tug, in that they felt that their families did not quite understand their experiences or their desire to continue learning. Aaron said his parents did not necessarily understand the value of lifelong learning, and Tom expressed a similar view:

I think it's still quite new. Especially at high levels of education. Like because my Dad he did Certificate or National Certificate. Um but I guess it wasn't furthering your ed... you haven't stopped just at a degree. You've gone further. So I guess in terms of that, no I think we're still learning about it. That you can keep going. [Aaron]

Yeah um they don't like I think that they're proud and stuff like that and they say well done when I get my grades back and stuff but I know... I guess because all of them they haven't really gone to university or anything that I don't really....I don't know it's not like they push me to go further or motivate me to go further. It's almost like "Ok you've done really well, you can... you don't have to go any further" sort of thing. [Tom]

The difference in these two quotes is in the openness to understanding higher education further. Tom's words seem to suggest that his parents have a fixed view whereas Aaron's words suggest the family is learning together. Similarly, Dinah suggested that, while her parents did not know a lot about higher education, they were learning from what she and her sister discussed with them. She also compared her parents' understanding of how to support her in her study with that of her cousins with whom she lived:

My parents would always know don't distract her. But I think it's different because none of my cousins have been to university so they don't really understand what the um the situation needs. [Dinah]

Eva talked about the support of her parents in sorting out her living situation, and other students such as Zoe talked about her parents being proud of her. The findings about the emotional support the students expressed as receiving from their parents while at university were largely consistent with the articulation by their parents of the value of education, which they conveyed that they were aware of through their schooling years. The findings about parental support while at university are a continuation of the findings about emotional support for the students while at school, and echo them in the sense that the parents may not always have known about the requirements and processes of the university, but nevertheless conveyed their support for their children in their university endeavours.

Limited impact of the role of economic capital

Only two of the students in this study identified finance, a form of economic capital, as an issue that created challenge for them. The school decile for the secondary schools the students attended are set out in Table 5.1 at the beginning of the Chapter. Five of the students (Aaron, Dinah, Tom, Eva and Lily) reported that they received a student allowance, which is only available if parents earn below a certain income. In addition they had student loans.

Only Lily and Eva talked about the negative impact of financial issues. Lily said she left home because it was not conducive to her studying but found that trying to juggle 20 hours per week part-time work to support herself and study was too difficult. Eva said that she found that the demands of her part-time work, which she undertook because she felt the arguments about money in her extended family's household implied she needed to contribute more financially, interfered with her study and "had a huge bad effect" on her academic performance. This had a downward spiral effect because, after she failed some papers, Eva's allowance was reduced, and she said that after she

had paid her board she only had a little amount left to get to university and have lunch. Eva said her academic performance improved after her parents sorted out the issues with her extended family, and Eva changed to only working on the weekend.

While some of the other students commented on the challenges of living off a student income, they did not suggest that finances had been a barrier to study. Dinah did not seem to be concerned about finances but was put off by the paperwork involved in applying for an allowance, even though she had received one in her first year. Aaron said he found the student allowance “survivable” but found the cost of parking in the city expensive, so would park and walk for at least half an hour. Tom found it frustrating that he could only earn a certain amount of money from part-time work before it impacted on his student allowance. He worked extra unpaid hours (sometimes working up to 30 hours a week) to get experience and extra benefits like a uniform allowance.

Emma lamented that she had an enormous student loan because of her change in programme and was not sure if she would be eligible to continue to get the loan for as long as she needed it. Eva was the only student who commented in a positive way about the student allowance and loan system:

I know that most times I get so angry with Studylink not giving us enough allowance but they play a huge part in this because if it wasn't for the student loan goodness I don't know where my parents would get the money you know together financially. Imagine if we had to pay for... so the Government's done all of that. [Eva]

The other students, Daniel, Zoe and Sam, did not mention finance. Finance appears to have had the most impact on the students who were living away from home (e.g. Eva and Tom) or were living independently (e.g. Lily). It is notable that, of the ten students, seven were living at home. This may have helped finance to be less of an issue for them.

Discussion of Theme 5

The literature about individual identifiable factors that contribute to student success, which was discussed in Chapter 2, largely had a focus on the students' situations while at university, rather than experiences prior to university. This theme also has such a focus and, in that respect, it is the theme that most directly relates to theory about factors that contribute to student success or withdrawal in higher education. Some of the factors that have been identified in the literature as contributing to student success were present in the student narratives, and some of the factors that have been identified as contributing to student withdrawal were absent.

Factors that encourage student success that were present in the narratives include fitting with the institutional culture (Kuh & Love, 2000; Reay, David, et al., 2001), and social integration and sense of belonging (Thomas, 2012). Although most of the students had not known what to expect from City University, and as noted in the previous theme did not appear to have sufficient information to be concerned about whether they would fit well with the institutional culture and the other students, they all expressed positive views about the University either in terms of the environment or the structure and teaching of the Business degree. Two specific aspects of the University that were mentioned by the students, and which have been recognised in the literature as contributing to a sense of belonging, were small classes (Curtis et al., 2011) in the form of workshops for each first year paper, which had about 36 students in them and which several of the students said they found helpful, and induction or orientation (Alsford & Rose, 2014), which both Aaron and Zoe mentioned enabled them to connect with existing friends or make new friends.

Although none of the students specifically referred to diversity within the Business degree, it is interesting that, despite their diverse backgrounds, the ten students expressed positive views about their experiences. City University states in its strategic plan that it aims to cater for a diverse population of students and create an environment where everyone is valued ([City] University, 2017), and it could be inferred from the students' comments about

their experiences that, for these students at least, City University was meeting this aim.

The students did not express concern about fitting in or, in Bourdieusian terms, express concerns or feelings of not having the same cultural capital as other students. In this respect, the students did not reflect New Zealand studies that have found that some students find universities Eurocentric (Mayeda et al., 2014). However, this finding does not necessarily suggest that City University is not Eurocentric. There may be reasons why the students, particularly the Maori and Pacific students, may not have expressed these concerns. Firstly, both students who identified as Maori also said that they had had an upbringing that aligned with the New Zealand European approach and values. Two of the Pacific students (Eva and Sam) expressly noted that they were used to being in predominantly New Zealand European environments, and in that respect their earlier schooling experiences may have enabled them to find the “third space” (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013) or Polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010), which Abrahams and Ingram, and Mila Schaaf and Robinson argued would enable them to move between their Pacific culture and the New Zealand European culture with ease once they reached university.

Dinah did not allude to moving between cultures. Rather, she said that when she first arrived at University (where she was at a different campus from the other students), her perception was that it was mostly Samoan students, and she said that gave her a level of comfort. All four of the Pacific students conveyed a high level of capital in their Pacific cultures. It is to be hoped that the fact that none of them mentioned any feelings that could be associated with habitus tug between their Pacific culture and the university environment, suggests that the University recognised the importance of their cultural identity, which Gavala & Flett (2005) argued is an important factor for success at university. The four Pacific students also all referred to their Christian beliefs, which at least one New Zealand study has found can provide inspiration and guidance for Pacific students (Ng Shiu, 2011).

Support from various sources can be a significant factor for non-traditional students (Merrill, 2012). Consistent with the literature about the importance of social connection at university (Prebble et al., 2004; Thomas, 2002; Thomas, 2012), almost all the students referred to the support they received from peers as being important for their success. While supportive friends is a form of social capital, the fact that the students felt they were able to find like-minded other students who were keen to study is a reflection of the institutional habitus of City University (Reay et al., 2010). Reay et al. (2010) argued that students can find themselves in the wrong university, not just in terms of class but also in terms of learner identity, for example, where a student who wants to work hard but finds him or herself in a culture of laid-back learners. If this happens, they can experience disjuncture. While the student narratives in this study suggest that there were students at City University who were laid-back (such as those Sam said he was influenced by in his first semester when he failed), the students' comments suggested there were sufficient numbers of other students who were keen to graduate for the students to find kindred spirits, and none of them (other than Sam initially) mentioned feeling any pressure not to study and be more laid-back. Rather, the students' views reflected studies that argue that it is important to find like-minded people (Dewart & Rowan, 2007), and they were able to do so. While, given the size of the study, it might be an overstatement to say the environment was supportive of the students' dispositions to learning, it can be said that none of the students expressed a view that the learning environment as evidenced by the attitudes of other students presented a challenge to their dispositions.

The importance of family support featured in the narratives of the students, both in their school years and while they were at university. All the students expressed the view that their parents were supportive of their studying at university. Even though some of the parents were not familiar with the university system, this emotional support may have reduced the likelihood of the students experiencing habitus tug between their home environment and any changes in habitus they were developing through attendance at university. With the exception of Tom, the students did not suggest that they felt that they had to distance themselves from university when they were at home, or vice

versa, suggesting limited habitus tug (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013). Eva and Dinah did express the view that they felt the need to distance themselves from university when staying with their relatives who they said did not understand university life, but that was not the case with their immediate families. The findings in this study are consistent with New Zealand literature about student success factors, where family support has been identified as important, particularly for Pacific students (Zepke et al., 2011).

A final factor that has been recognised as contributing to student success at university is achievement at school (Duff, 2004; Engler & Smyth, 2011). In one sense, the student stories correlate with the findings in the literature that better academic achievement at school is more likely to result in success at university (Duff, 2004; Engler & Smyth, 2011; National Audit Office, 2007; Ussher, 2008). Four of the five students who gained solid University Entrance passes (Tom, Emma, Zoe and Nadia) said they passed all the papers at university. Four of the students, who either did not achieve University Entrance through school (Lily, Eva, Aaron) or who gained a marginal pass (Sam), said they experienced failure early on in their initially-chosen course. However, the findings in this study add a caveat to the relevance of academic achievement at school as a predictor of success at university in two respects. Firstly, the students' views of success in this study were wider than completion of a degree within three years of leaving school, which highlights that using academic achievement as a predictor of "success" does not necessarily identify when that success can occur. Secondly, and related to the first point, as a factor in predicting success, achievement at school does not take into account that a student's path to degree study may not be linear. Aaron is a good example. He did not gain University Entrance and then failed the second semester of the Certificate he was enrolled in – therefore, he could be classed as not being successful. However, in terms of his performance at degree level study, he said he was getting good grades. This was after he returned from his Mission, where he said he gained a new appreciation not only of the value of education but also of his own ability to learn. In the face of those life experiences and insights, his achievement at school some four years earlier would seem less relevant, or at least its value

as a predictor of success is lessened where the path to degree study is not linear. In contrast, the value of the concept of learning careers, in understanding student success, is not weakened where the students' path is not linear because, as a concept, it can take the whole student journey into account.

Factors that can lead to withdrawal found in the literature were largely absent from the students' narratives. Financial issues, which is a factor that can lead to withdrawal (Yorke, 1999), was mentioned as a barrier by only two students (Eva and Lily), and, while it adversely affected Eva for a period of time, it did not lead to her withdrawal. Unhappiness with choice of course, which is another factor that can lead to withdrawal (Davies & Elias, 2002), was not raised as an issue by the students, who were all positive about their choice of the Business degree. However, Nadia, Emma and Daniel said it had led to withdrawal from their earlier courses.

This study shows that identification of factors that lead to student success or withdrawal is useful as a general guide, as there was some general applicability in this study of some of the relevant factors that have been identified in the literature. However, what the study supports more strongly is the acknowledgement that the decision to stay or withdraw is a complex mix of factors (Yorke & Longden, 2004), and that individual student journeys are not predictable (Bloomer, 2001). It is through a narrative process examining student learning careers that some of those complexities can begin to be understood and the individual journeys can be explained.

5.8. Chapter conclusion

Chapter 4 set out in story form the learning careers of each student. This chapter has taken a different approach by focusing on the development of habitus, capital, experiences of habitus tug and interrupted trajectories

throughout the students' learning careers. The dual process of restorying and then re-analysing the transcripts strengthened the analysis of the data in a way that was consistent with the circular process of hermeneutical inquiry:

The interpretation of part of something depends on interpreting the whole, but interpreting the whole depends on the interpretation of the parts." (Usher, 1996, p.19).

Interpretation of "the parts" - that is, the experiences of habitus tug and trajectory interruptions that occurred in a student's learning career - was carried out after I had interpreted "the whole" - that is, the development of the connections between events that made up the story of each student's learning career. In turn, the greater understanding of "the parts", in the form of analysis of context, habitus tug and trajectory interruptions, brought a fuller understanding of "the whole" learning career for each student.

This study adds to our understanding of student success at university through an approach to the data that has not been used before in the New Zealand higher education context, that is, the use of a narrative approach to develop student stories, together with a Bourdieusian analysis of the data, which together enabled a deep insight into prior experiences of students who were mostly non-traditional.

The narrative approach has enabled the tracing of student learning careers as a framework to examine the development of an educated habitus and to delve into each learning career through identification of habitus tug and trajectory interruptions. This was an adaptation of the concept of learning career proposed by Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a). What that adaptation has allowed is the identification of particular events or experiences in the students' educational journey that can be related to the changes in learning dispositions and habitus, and the development of capital. I acknowledge that in taking this approach I have put more emphasis on the role of habitus than on the role of symbolic interactionism, where both were employed by Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a). However, I note that Bloomer (2001) suggested the

concepts were being proffered for goodness of fit, and Hodkinson (Bloomer, Hodkinson, & Billett, 2004) said he had been more drawn to habitus as a useful basis for the concept than symbolic interactionism. Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a) suggested that more work needed to be done to determine whether the concept of learning careers was useful. I have responded to that suggestion by adapting the concept to include identification of habitus tug and trajectory interruption through the learning careers. This chapter has demonstrated that the combination of concepts provides a useful way to gain insight into the development of an educated habitus, and adds to our understanding of what contributes to success at university in the New Zealand context by considering prior experiences, and past and present contexts that are outside the scope of studies that focus only on the current university experience.

As well, this study contributes to our understanding of how students view success at university, and shows that the view of success reflected in policy is narrower than the view of success held by the students in this study. It is notable that, although several of the students would have been considered unsuccessful in policy terms at various parts of their educational journey, the students themselves took a longer-term view and, despite non-linear journeys to and through university, considered themselves successful. While it is understandable that the Government as the funder of much of university study is keen to limit exposure to liability, the findings in this study support arguments for a broader view of success to be taken by policy makers (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2001; Quinn et al., 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2010). The study adds weight to the arguments of the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2017) in its enquiry into new models of tertiary education, that the higher education funding system in New Zealand should be changed so that higher education providers have more incentives to help students to change course and provider, to recognise prior learning and to make funding policies more flexible by moving away from the focus on completion of full qualifications.

The findings in this study reflect many of the findings of Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a; 2000b) about the non-traditional students that they interviewed, in that the students' paths were not linear, their decision making was not always informed, they experienced changes in their dispositions to learning, that their social group had an influence, and that learning careers and dispositions to learning are difficult to predict. But the study also adds to Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000a; 2000b) observations about non-traditional students, and to the literature about factors that lead to student success, by identifying two key aspects common to all the students' narratives and which I have interpreted to be significant. The first is the value their parents placed on education, which they articulated to their children through words or actions. The second is the emotional support the students said their parents provided throughout their education. In this respect, this study supports the argument that emotional support can encourage the development of capital (Reay, 2000). This study suggests that, even in the absence of active parental involvement in students' education, the articulation of the value of education and the emotional support consistent with that value throughout a student's learning career, have a role to play in the development of capital and an educated habitus, which in turn can contribute to success. In that way, contexts and experiences from very early on in a student's life may contribute to their later success at university. The implications of these findings for higher education in New Zealand are interesting because parental values and support prior to students attending university (and even while they are at university) are out of the control of universities. What the universities can do, however, is to recognise that value and support are important and support wider societal initiatives to foster these.

The study also contributed to literature in several ways. Firstly, it extended Nash's (2002) concept of educated habitus into higher education, noting that the voluntary nature of higher education highlighted the role of needing to see the relevance of what was being learned. Secondly, this study added to the concept of habitus tug, which was developed by Ingram (2011) and Abrahams and Ingram (2013) mainly using a focus on differing class expectations, by finding that it can arise through differing cultural expectations or even differing

peer expectations within the same field. The study also added a nuance to the argument developed by Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) about the devastation of failure experienced by non-traditional students, by finding that this appeared to be less related to being a non-traditional student and more to the strength or fragility of academic confidence, which in turn appeared to be related to how recent the experience of academic success had been.

What was also notable about the findings in this study, that differed from the context in which the theoretical concepts which provided the basis for this study were developed, was the absence of concern of the mostly non-traditional students in this study about whether they would fit well at a chosen university. This appeared to be related to an absence of information about higher education generally and individual universities in particular, in a way that differentiated the students in this study from both non-traditional and traditional students in studies in the United Kingdom, who appeared to be much better informed. Happily, as it turned out, the students said they felt comfortable with the environment they encountered, but the study does highlight the paucity of information on which decisions were based. Again this study supports the arguments of the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2017) that the Government should review how career education in schools is carried out, so that there is more of a focus on building career skills and that official sources of career and study information should be rationalised. It is possible that some of the experiences of the students in this study who had non-linear pathways to university could have been alleviated with better resourcing in schools, so that students had better information and advice when adversity struck.

Much of the literature attempting to identify factors that contribute to student success has a focus on the student's situation at the time they are undertaking university study. This is understandable because universities can only readily address issues that affect students while they are studying at the particular institution. Using the concept of learning careers as a framework to gain insights into and interpretations about how the students developed the dispositions to learning that they have while at university, is more challenging

for universities because some of the contributions to such dispositions are not within the control of the institution to address. One aspect that came out relatively consistently in the students' narratives that *can* be addressed by universities was the positive role of social capital in the form of peer support gained through informal social connections. This reinforces the importance of structuring opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to enable social interaction.

For the most part, the experiences that I have identified as contributing to success, such as parental views and support (a form of cultural capital), and life and school experiences contributing to academic confidence (a form of academic capital which contributed to an educated habitus), occurred outside or before the university experience. While the environment provided by the university was a contributor to the student's comfort and enjoyment at university, their habitus, which included confidence and a positive disposition to learning, had been formed over a period of time, and other factors, such as living environment, were not something a university could address. As noted earlier however, universities can support others who have a role in fostering these earlier in students' lives. As well, an understanding of the role that parental values and support play in success could assist those advising students when at university, for example, by gaining an understanding of whether a student may be experiencing habitus tug, if their decision to be at university is at odds with parental views and expectations. In other words, a more holistic approach to student course counselling and planning could be taken.

The analysis of the changes throughout the students' learning careers, that was enabled by a combination of a narrative approach and analysis of the data using a Bourdieusian-influenced approach, has provided explanations for student success, even where statistics would suggest the students would be less likely to be successful – for example, six of the students were registered in City University's administrative data as Maori or Pacific, which predictive modelling at City University suggests means they would be less likely to succeed (Jia & Maloney, 2015). While identification of individual or a

combination of factors that support student success can provide useful general predictive information, currently individual student outcomes are not predictable. However, they can be explainable. A focus on student learning careers can supplement our understanding of success by providing explanations as to why individual students do not come within the predictive statistics, through an holistic exploration of contexts and experiences that go beyond the type of data that is normally collected from students by universities.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this chapter I draw conclusions from the study and discuss contributions to knowledge before discussing the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for higher education practice as well as areas for further research.

6.1 Answering the research questions

The aim of the research was to better understand the experiences and contexts of students who are successful in the Business degree at City University. This was a first step in being able to identify how to build on those experiences and optimise my practice in the oversight of the Business degree, to take account of student contexts and to lead change in the practice of others involved in its operation. The study sought to achieve this through using a narrative approach, underpinned by hermeneutics, to explore student experiences and background prior to attending City University, and experiences outside university when they were attending. A two-stage analysis process was undertaken, and extensions of Bourdieu's thinking tools, including the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories, provided a guiding theoretical framework for the study.

Main research question

As noted in Chapter 3, there was an overarching research question and three sub-questions in this study. The overarching question was:

What do the stories of students' prior experience and context tell us about why they succeed in the context of a university which is committed to widening participation?

In this question, the term "stories" describes the wider sense of the students' narratives/stories which formed the data.

The students in this study articulated the features of an educated habitus which Nash (2002) argued supported educational success. The students showed a willingness to be educated in the particular area of study they were in, and they put in place practices to enable that to happen. By focusing on past experiences, the research question enabled analysis of how that educated habitus developed. This development was traced through the students' learning careers, with the analysis of the data showing that they had positive parental reinforcement about the value of education, and positive early associations with education. Analysing the data through a focus on their learning careers also showed that, while there were some interrupted trajectories involving setback, there were also successes, which appeared to help the students align their dispositions to education with the values and expectations of their parents, and encourage academic confidence. This positive disposition to education, and parental and peer support continued at university. Although the students were from diverse backgrounds, they all expressed a positive view of the university environment and experience.

Importantly, what this study reinforced was that prior experience and context *can* tell us something about why the students in this study were succeeding at university. While what is going on at university, inside and outside the classroom, is highly relevant to whether students succeed, what is going on in their lives outside university and what has gone before, even going back to early educational experiences, is also relevant. This is because the students' backgrounds and prior experiences support the development of the habitus and capital that the students bring when they encounter their higher educational experience. Understanding prior experience and context is helpful for identifying where there is alignment between a student's capital and habitus, and the expectations of the higher education system once a student is at university. More importantly, looking at it the other way, it can illuminate how the higher education system and its institutions do not align with students' habitus and capital when they come to university, and is a first step in considering how institutions could adapt so as to better align with the habitus and capital of their students.

Sub-questions

- *What are the students' contexts and the life and educational experiences they bring to City University?*

The students' stories in Chapter 4 answered this sub-question. These illustrated that there were differences in the individual trajectories toward successful university study and that, for most of the students, their path towards graduation was not a linear path. This would have had implications for the students in terms of cost and for institutions in terms of meeting their target qualification rates.

A key point that was illustrated by this study is that, while there were some similarities in some of the experiences, the complex combination of background and experience meant that each student's story was different from the others. While I acknowledge that, in order to create effective policy and practice in universities, students must be treated as a group, the stories highlight that we must also remember that students are not necessarily an homogenous group, and that even within similar socio-economic or ethnic groups their experiences can be very different, and that we should be cautious about categorising students based on socio-economic or ethnic status (Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer, & van der Merwe, 2010b).

- *How do successful students explain their success?*

The students in this study explained their views of success in wider terms than passing courses or achieving a degree, and in that respect their views aligned more with individual progression towards their own goals (Zepke & Leach, 2010) than the hard outcomes of qualification completion used by policy makers.

Success at university was explained by the students by reference to behaviours such as participating and attending class, and some

acknowledged the habits and skills they had acquired during their schooling years. Some spoke about external pressures such as home life creating challenges for success. Some also talked about learning from experiences during their school years or early on at university, showing that they too could see connections between past experiences and current success.

The views of the students in this study, who mostly did not mention grades in their definitions of success, but who took a wider view of the educational journey, provide a prompt for me as a higher education practitioner to take a more holistic view of success. It is also important for those staff advising students about academic progress to understand that a student may have a more holistic view of success than just passing and achieving high grades, as this may impact on the advice given.

The linkages the students were able to make between behaviours and success are not new findings, in that participation and attendance at class are often emphasised as important to success. However, it is useful to have that reinforced by students making those connections themselves. The references by some students to previous experiences suggests that it may be useful to ask new students to explicitly address success at university and how they might achieve that success, by being encouraged to think about times they achieved success, what led to that success and how that could be translated into the university environment.

How do theories explain the contribution of these prior experiences and contexts to the success of these students at City University?

The complexity and individuality of the students' contexts and experiences in this study reinforced that student success or withdrawal is not easily predictable (Bloomer, 2001). The concept of learning careers provided a framework that aligned with the stories developed in Chapter 4. Within that framework, the concepts of habitus tug and interrupted trajectories enabled identification and examination of key points in the students' learning journeys,

and, taken together, provided a theoretical framework that enabled an explanation of how each of the students developed an educated habitus.

For the students in this study, there were some common elements throughout their learning careers that appear to have supported the development of an educated habitus. These were early positive associations with education, through parental values and schooling experiences which contribute to the development of habitus (Bourdieu 1976, Moore, 2012), the development of cultural capital through the emotional support of their parents for their education (Reay, 2000), the development of academic capital through successes and acquiring academic credentials (Naidoo, 2004) and social capital in the form of supportive peers (Thomson, 2012).

The capital and habitus of the students in this study did not align in all respects with either non-traditional students or middle class students in the United Kingdom, which was the context in which the concepts of learning career, habitus tug and interrupted trajectories were developed. In that context, the literature advances the argument that non-traditional students can have an uncomfortable experience in higher education if they do not have cultural or social capital that middle class students are likely to possess, which would ease their transition to university, and that where their habitus is not in alignment with the middle class culture of the institution, this causes them to be in a state of habitus tug, which they have to reconcile somehow.

This (albeit overly simplified) trajectory was not clearly apparent for the students in this study, who were mostly non-traditional students. While there were some elements in common with non-traditional students in the United Kingdom, the importance of particular types of capital and habitus fit with institution were different in this study. For the students in this study, the development of habitus from the family environment in which education was valued, along with the family support that built emotional capital, seemed influential. The absence of reference to other forms of cultural and social capital, such as significant parental involvement and use of family connections to advance their child's education, did not seem to have a significant impact

for the students in this study other than in terms of decision making. For varying reasons, the students in this study expressed feeling comfortable with the university environment – the feeling of being a ‘fish out of water’ was absent for these students.

These are interesting findings because they demonstrate that an explanation using concepts derived from Bourdieu’s toolkit for the reasons for the success of non-traditional students in higher education differs in the context of City University in New Zealand from the context in which the guiding theoretical concepts for this study were developed. In one sense, the finding that the students were not concerned about fitting in before they came to City University was positive, because it suggests that a level of anxiety that is present for non-traditional students in the United Kingdom was absent for the students in this study. In turn, this suggests the students in this study would not have adopted a “this is not for the likes of me” approach. That is an encouraging sign for widening participation and City University’s role in that. It was also encouraging for widening participation to find that, while parental emotional support was important, familiarity or involvement with the schooling system did not seem to be essential for the students in this study. This is encouraging because, for some parents, active involvement in schooling may be intimidating.

What was not so positive was the apparent lack of information some students used for their decision-making. While for the most of the students in this study there did not seem to be adverse impacts of that lack of information, this may have been serendipitous and for some, such as Eva, lack of information led to a delay in her reaching university.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge about student success in several ways. Firstly, it has added to the bank of stories already developed in respect of non-traditional students in universities in New Zealand (Madjar et al., 2010).

However, it has taken that work a stage further by introducing a theoretical analysis of the stories/narratives through the use of the two-stage analysis process, whereby not only were stories developed, but also the data were re-analysed through a Bourdieusian lens. It uses theory to add to our understanding of why individual students may succeed at university, through recognition of the importance of alignment between student dispositions to learning and the habitus they have developed from their family and educational experiences.

Secondly, the study adds to what is known about student success in a particular context – that is, City University. It is complementary to the study already undertaken to predict student success based on different variables that are obtainable from City University data (Jia & Maloney, 2015) by exploring other experiences and contexts that are not available from that data. Again in doing so, although there were some commonalities amongst the student stories, the study suggests that, while combinations of variables can provide useful guidance for universities as to who is likely to succeed, they cannot capture the complexity of individual experiences nor predict the success of an individual student. This study adds insight into how some students in the Business degree view success and the underlying disposition towards learning that supports that success, and adds to our understanding of student success at City University by using theory to explain the success of the students in this study.

Thirdly, the study used concepts that are extensions of Bourdieu's thinking tools, and which were developed in a particular context, and applied them in the New Zealand higher education context. In doing so, it identified that in the context of this study some forms of cultural and social capital played less of a role in the experiences of the students in this study than discussed in the United Kingdom literature about non-traditional students, and that parental views of education, emotional capital in the form of support and reinforcement of the value of education, and academic capital (or sometimes the lack of it) assumed more importance.

The study adds to the literature about habitus tug by identifying that, in the context of this study, cultural differences and peer expectations were potential contributors to habitus tug, which differed from the more class-focused work of Ingram (2011) and Abrahams and Ingram (2013) who developed the concept. This study adds a nuance to the argument that non-traditional students find failure in higher education devastating (Byrom & Lightfoot, 2013) by identifying that the level of academic confidence can be relevant. It also applied Nash's (2002) concept of educated habitus to higher education and identified that being able to see relevance of what was being learned, as a factor contributing to a willingness to be educated, was foregrounded for some students because of the voluntary nature of participation in higher education.

Finally, the study adapted the concept of learning careers by using it as a framework within which to also consider developments of Bourdieu's thinking tools – in particular habitus tug and trajectory interruptions - to more specifically trace developments in students' learning careers. It responded to Bloomer and Hodgkinson's (2000a) suggestion that more work needed to be done to determine whether the concept of learning careers was useful. By adapting the concept by combining it with habitus tug and interrupted trajectories, and also combining it with a narrative approach, a comprehensive picture of the changing dispositions to learning and the complex factors that influenced those dispositions for each of the students was portrayed to show that family context and educational history can play a role in student success at university. This study has shown that the concept of learning careers is useful, not only as a means of gaining greater insight into student decisions to stay at or leave university, but also as a reminder that students are individuals whose experiences may have taken them in different and unexpected directions.

6.3 Limitations of the study

For this study, the sample size could be considered to be a limitation. The study focused on one degree in one university with 10 participants. It is not possible to draw generalisations from a sample of this size and I have not sought to do so. As noted by Cousin (2009), narrative research can involve as few as one participant, because its aim is to gain depth rather than breadth of understanding, and the number of participants will also be influenced by pragmatic considerations such as the size and timing of the study. The advantage of the sample size in this study was that it enabled the gathering of rich data from each individual and enabled me to undertake in-depth analysis and contribute to what is known about student success in New Zealand.

Another potential limitation was the recruitment of only successful students. As noted in Chapter 1, this was a deliberate focus of the study because of my desire to be able to capitalise on what was supporting success. However, although the participants in this study considered themselves to be successful, and they had successfully transitioned into at least their second semester of study, all but one had encountered failure or setback in their learning careers at the time of the interviews. This enabled some insight into the role failure played in their learning careers, as well as the role of success.

The narrative approach, which involves the participants recounting their stories and choosing what to include and what to leave out, means that their narratives were their interpretation of events as they remembered them, and as such are conditional and mediated by the present (Merrill & West, 2009). Coupled with this was my role as researcher which I have acknowledged inevitably involved me bringing my own interpretation to the data. This is an acknowledged aspect of narrative research and of hermeneutics, and is part of the sense-making process that human beings engage in through narrative research (Polkinghorne, 1988). As noted in Chapter 3, all the students reviewed their stories and either confirmed they were happy with them or in one case requested small changes. The changes requested did not conflict

with the data as originally captured but rather involved placing more emphasis on the emotional aspects of the events.

6.4 Implications of the study

Implications for lecturers and higher education classroom practice

This study serves as a reminder of the individuality of students and that we should not make assumptions about students based on ethnic or demographic profiles. The stories in Chapter 4 provide a digestible and impactful way to foster this awareness among academic staff teaching on the Business degree and to provide them with an insight into some students' journeys to university. I am working closely with lecturers teaching on the first year core courses as we redevelop the curriculum for the Business degree. I am proposing to hold a workshop with them, using design thinking methodology in which we will address the core papers holistically, including transition to university. I propose that the stories will form part of the contextual material for the workshop. I can also make the stories available to staff new to teaching on the degree to provide some insight into the diversity of our students.

There are implications for classroom practice arising out of this study, which I can address in my regular meetings with two groups - the developers of the core courses for the refreshed Business degree and a sub-group of those developers, who I am leading in the preparation of a suite of activities and materials to address transition to university and which will be embedded in the core courses.

The first implication is the need for early feedback. This study reinforces the importance of the role of academic confidence. It is well recognised that early and effective feedback for students is an influencer on learning and confidence (Hattie, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and, therefore, such feedback should be encouraged early in the students' semesters. Work is already underway with the developers of the core courses to co-ordinate

assessment and in particular to identify the points in their courses where students will be receiving formative and summative feedback.

The second implication relates to the students' ability in this study to articulate what led to success and their reference to prior experiences as being influential on their behaviours. This suggests that it would be useful to address success specifically in class. I will include in the suite of activities addressing transition, reflective activities for students to think about what success at university means for them, and what behaviours in the past have contributed to academic success for them that they can build on while at university.

Implications for the operation of the Business degree

The findings in this study about social support reinforce the importance of ensuring that there are early opportunities for students to meet each other. This is currently achieved by ensuring that at least half of the student contact hours in their first semester take place in classes of no more than 36 students. For the changes that are about to be implemented in the Business degree that balance has been retained.

This study has encouraged me to take a wider view of success than my previous focus on completion and retention rates. Taking a student focus, it has encouraged me to continue to look for ways to re-distribute resources to enable student-support staff to provide more holistic and individualised academic advice and to support early intervention in academic progress issues.

As well, the finding that all the students had strong parental valuing of education and emotional support suggests that this is something to be encouraged for students at a very early age, and suggests that it is relevant to find out the student's family's view of them being at university (if the student is willing to share that information) and, if support is lacking, to try and address this in different ways. One way may be to connect the student with a more senior (and by implication, successful) student as it has been found that role

models can play a part in success (Benseman et al., 2006), and it could encourage students to visualise themselves as successful, which can be a motivator (Leondari, 2007).

To advance these changes, I have initiated a project to use more automated responses to routine generic student questions with the intention that student-support staff, who currently respond to these questions, will be freed up to provide more individualised advice to students. The next step will be to work with student-support staff to develop a shared understanding of the need for more holistic academic advice in which the student's background, current situation and disposition to learning (if the student is willing to share that) are taken into account before advising them, or before any decisions are made about exclusion for lack of academic progress.

Automating routine enquiries should also free up time for earlier intervention in academic progress cases. Currently, when students fail a compulsory course in the Business degree they receive a letter notifying them that they are considered to be "at risk" with more active intervention taking place if they fail again the next semester. This study has reinforced my view that students should be contacted to see what support can be given to them the first time they fail a course.

I am proposing to begin the process of fostering a shared understanding of the need for these changes in student advice and academic progress processes, and a culture that recognises that failing a course may be part of a learning career and not necessarily an indication of unsuitability for university study, with a workshop for student-support staff using design thinking methodology. The intention of this process is to enable staff to arrive at these understandings themselves rather than having them imposed, and from there to identify the areas where they feel they need further development. The stories can be included as contextual material for this workshop also.

Since I began this study, City University has put in place initiatives to connect with schools and to partner with local selected schools. This aligns with the

findings in this study about the relevance of early experiences and parental support in the success of the students. This partnership includes bringing parents onto campus along with students to give both an opportunity to find out more about the university. This is consistent with fostering a shared value of the importance of education and should be continued and expanded if resources allow. Building on the work of Madjar et al. (2010) and Teevale and Teu (2018), about the importance of students and families having realistic expectations about university, and applying it more generically than the specific contexts the authors were considering, these initiatives could be extended to parents of Business degree students to experience being a student for a day, which could enhance the emotional support parents provide for their children through a greater understanding of the expectations of modern universities. This is an initiative that I have discussed with the Faculty's Director of Community Partnerships for implementation at one campus in 2019.

This study affirms the important role of the pre-degree Foundation Programme for students who do not meet the entry criteria for the Business degree, as a contributor to widening participation. In this study it played a role in enabling achievement of academic capital, both in the form of confidence and credentials. The marketing and recruitment focus is on the Business degree but given the Foundation Programme's contribution to widening participation, I will discuss with our marketing and recruitment staff how its profile can be raised in schools so that potential students are aware of it as an option.

Implications for University Strategy and Policy

I can drive the initiatives for the Business degree that I have outlined above because of my role. As well, as part of my role I am on several university-wide committees and involved in several university-wide work streams mostly in the area of learning and teaching, and student support. Through those committees and work streams I can contribute to discussions about university policy from a perspective that is informed by my learning from undertaking this

study. Examples include the University Teaching and Learning Committee which is currently considering student learning experiences in respect of which concepts of success are relevant, and a work stream committee that is implementing the use of learning analytics to support student success. While the main focus of this group is on predictive analytics, it has also been recognised by the committee that there is a need for qualitative data. This study can contribute to that data. Another work stream committee is currently considering student support across the university and although I am not a member of that group, my study has been read by the Manager of Student Success for Business Undergraduate Students, who reports through to me and is part of that group, and with whom I have ongoing discussions about potential changes to our practice.

This study was too small to form the basis for recommendations of changes to national policy. What it does do is contribute to knowledge about how policy plays out in practice and in that way should be useful for the University's Strategy and Planning department, members of whom are on some of the University-wide committees I have referred to above and who have direct contact with national policy makers. The findings support two areas of the recommendations made by the New Zealand Productivity Commission (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2017) who carried out a government-sponsored inquiry into the need for new models for tertiary education in New Zealand. Firstly, this study demonstrated that in practice there was a difference between the definition of success that is implicit in the funding model for universities, and the experiences and views of the students in this study, whom that model is designed to benefit. Linked to the views of success, the study also demonstrated a tension between the funding models which do not easily accommodate changing courses, and the non-linear pathways to successful degree study that some of the students in this study took.

The Productivity Commission (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2017) found that the funding system in New Zealand tied institutions down so that they were not student centred and innovative and it provided a disincentive to help students change their course of study. The Productivity Commission

recommended that performance-linked funding be removed and that any metrics used be adjusted for the characteristics of the student intake. It also recommended avoiding penalising providers when students leave for reasons unrelated to provider performance. From the perspective of a practitioner within the system, my view is that these recommendations, if adopted, could help change our views of success so that we view the non-linear paths taken by some students in this study more positively and with less angst than is currently engendered by funding implications.

Secondly, the experience of the students as portrayed in their narratives/stories was of decisions seemingly made on little information about universities. This finding has a potential role to play in advancing widening participation by ensuring that students' paths to university are more straightforward than was the case for some of the students in this study. The Productivity Commission found that career advice in schools was fragmented, that students were inadequately prepared for decision-making about tertiary study and that they were presented with a confusing array of material. It recommended that the Government review arrangements for career education in schools and rationalise official sources of career and study information. If this recommendation were enacted, it could alleviate situations such as Eva's and Aaron's where they did not appear to be aware of the range of options available to them when they did not achieve University Entrance.

Personal development and implications for personal practice

As I have already noted, the findings in this study have caused me to revisit my own view of success, and as a result seek to change practices within the Business degree about how we approach academic advice and academic progress. This study has enabled me to form a greater and more nuanced understanding of how my practice contributes to advancing education and how it is influenced by policy. I began this study with a desire to gain a better understanding of how in my role I could contribute to widening participation. Gewirtz and Cribb (2006) argued that carrying out ethically reflexive research requires being wary of value judgements preventing the researcher seeking out evidence that might challenge the researcher's prior values and beliefs. I

acknowledge that by focusing on successful students, I was more likely to form a more positive view of the contribution of the Business degree to widening participation. But even with that focus, the narrative approach and use of theory in the analysis revealed some of the challenges of widening participation, through identification of disruption to seamless progress to university that could be caused by interrupted trajectories, lack of academic confidence and credentials or detailed knowledge of the education system. I also acknowledge that my interpretation of the data was from a New Zealand European perspective which may be different from other cultural perspectives. While the findings in the study did affirm that the Business degree plays a role in widening participation, I considered that Gadamer's (1975) concept of fusion of horizons (Usher, 1996) applied to my experience in this study in that, while I could not discard my own values and beliefs, my own horizon was broadened through my research. In particular, when I began the study my understanding of widening participation was more in the abstract. This study has enabled me to develop a more concrete understanding of what widening participation means in practice, through the richness of the student narratives and the diversity of their educational experiences and their successes and setbacks. Fox et al. (2007) refer to practitioner researchers using propositional knowledge, which is theoretical, and process knowledge, which is a practitioner's understanding of the practice environment and processes. This study has enabled me to bring the two together to enhance my professional knowledge of widening participation and my understanding of my role in that process.

Areas for publication

I have identified three areas for possible publication from this thesis. These are in the areas of the use of learning careers combined with habitus tug and interrupted trajectories as a way of exploring the development of an educated habitus; the decision-making process by the students in this study about which university to attend; and the lack of alignment between the view of success expressed by the students in this study and the view of success implicit in current New Zealand Government higher education policy.

Future research

Despite the lack of information about university life, the students in this study had a positive experience in the Business degree at City University. An area for further research would be to explore in more depth what it was about the environment that was positive for the students and whether non-traditional students in other degrees or at other universities have also had a positive experience. This may give greater clarity about whether it was the particular environment of City University's Business degree that was a contributing factor or whether it is a feature of New Zealand universities in general that non-traditional students have a positive experience and experience fewer feelings of being a "fish out of water".

As noted earlier the study focused on students who were successful. A further area of research would be to take a similar approach with students who had withdrawn from study, with a particular focus on whether those students possessed the features of an educated habitus. This would increase our knowledge about the extent to which this contributes to success. However, this research would be challenging because of the difficulty in contacting students who have withdrawn and the possibility that such students may not want to discuss their experience which by implication was negative.

This study sought to interview students from a range of backgrounds and identify areas of commonality, rather than to focus on differences arising from cultural dimensions. Further research could examine differences by focusing on particular groups such as New Zealand European, Asian, Maori or Pacific students. It would be important to bear in mind the caution by Madjar et al. (2010b) not to categorise based on ethnicity. I would want to collaborate with a Maori or Pacific academic for any research addressing cultural aspects of Maori or Pacific students because of cultural sensitivities.

This study was prompted by a desire to better understand whether City University was contributing to social mobility. It focused on one part of a journey in social mobility, which was success at university. Further research could be undertaken about the next part of that journey, whether the students'

degree from City University places them on an equal footing with other graduates in gaining the employment opportunities that they seek.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This study aimed to enhance understanding of our Business degree students as a first step in being able to build on their experiences to encourage success. The study has reaffirmed for me that the Business degree does contribute to widening participation through its open entry criteria, the provision of a pre-degree Foundation programme, and through the environment it provides once the students are at University. It has also heightened my awareness of the importance of acknowledging students as individuals even though the large numbers in the Business degree make that a challenge. As a practitioner in higher education, undertaking this study has already influenced my practice in small ways, one example being a greater appreciation of the challenges students have faced getting to and while at university, such that I view failed papers as less calamitous, and students struggling with academic progress with more understanding for the need for each of their individual situations to be considered rather than applying hard and fast rules. I was humbled and impressed by the students who participated in this study, both with their openness and their perseverance, and it has been a valuable learning experience for me as an educational practitioner.

In the course of completing this study I have developed skills as a narrative researcher, which will be useful for further research in the area of student success into some of the areas I have identified. I was drawn early on in my doctoral journey to narrative research by Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2000a) article about learning careers which focused on only one student – Amanda Ball. The article resonated with me because the authors were able to articulate the development of their theory by drawing on the rich data of only one person. I have also been able to collect rich data in this study, which could similarly be used to articulate arguments in focused areas such as the role of information in decision making, the impact of trajectory interruptions

and habitus tug, and the role of social support in education in the New Zealand context.

This study has also given me the opportunity to begin my journey with the work of Bourdieu, and apply it in the New Zealand higher education context. The concept of learning careers has been useful as a framework for analysis of the development of an educated habitus, and could be employed in further studies into student success.

As someone who has been involved in the Business degree for many years and who had an appreciation at one level of the types of backgrounds and experiences of our students, I found the students' stories to be illuminating, both in terms of their diverse experiences and in the perseverance and resilience they showed in getting to and staying at University. One of the most positive aspects about the research for me was the reaction of the students who almost universally told me at the end of the interview how much they had enjoyed it and how it helped them make sense of things. This was affirming because it meant it was a constructive, meaningful and beneficial experience for both me as the researcher and for the students, and hopefully their participation in my study has been a positive contribution to their learning careers.

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Appendix 1 - University of Liverpool Ethics Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

ONLINE
PROGRAMMES

Dear Felicity Reid			
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.			
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)		
Review type:	Expedited		
PI:			
School:		Lifelong Learning	
Title:	Learning about success from student stories		
First Reviewer:	Dr. Lucilla Crosta		
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Marco Ferreira		
Other members of the Committee	Dr. Anthony Edwards, Dr. Martin Gough		
Date of Approval:	24/02/2016		
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:			
Conditions			

1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.		
<p>This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.</p> <p>Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).</p>				
Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.				

Kind regards,

Lucilla Crosta

Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix 2 – [City University] Ethics approval

24 March 2016

Felicity Reid

Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Felicity

Re Ethics Application: **16/62 Learning about student success from student stories.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the [City] University Ethics Committee ([CU]EC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 24 March 2019.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to [CU]EC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through [http://www.\[cu\].ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.[cu].ac.nz/researchethics). When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 24 March 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through [http://www.\[cu\].ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.[cu].ac.nz/researchethics). This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 24 March 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that [CU]EC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. [CU]EC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

[CU]EC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@\[cu\].ac.nz](mailto:ethics@[cu].ac.nz). All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

[City]University Ethics Committee

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule

Opening:

Thank participant for attending. Ensure participant is comfortable and understands

- what the study is about
- what the interview process is
- that the consent form is signed,
- agrees to interview being recorded

1. Participant background information to set the scene

Tell me a bit about yourself

- *age*
- *where you live*
- *what you are studying*
- *hobbies? Interests?*

2. Family

Tell me about your family

- *what do your parents do?*
- *brothers and sisters?*
- *extended family?*
- *what cultural values have you grown up with?*
- *any religious values you have grown up with?*

3. Childhood

How would you describe your childhood?

- *what was it like growing up in your neighbourhood?*
- *any memorable experiences?*

4. Primary

How would you describe your experience at primary school?

- *where did you go to primary school?*
- *can you describe the school (size, location, students)*
- *what are your memories about primary school?*

5. Intermediate School (if applicable)

How would you describe your experience at primary school?

- *where did you go to intermediate school?*
- *Can you describe the school (size, location, students)*
- *what are your memories about intermediate school?*

6. Secondary School

How would you describe your experience at secondary school?

- *where did you go to secondary school?*
- *can you describe the school (size, location, students)*

- *what are your memories about secondary school?*
- *What do you think you learned from secondary school?*
- *What did you achieve at secondary school?*

7. [City University]

Have others in your family attended university before you?

Why did you decide to come to [City University]?

How have you found the experience?

What has helped you? Why do you think that is?

What have you found challenging? Why do you think that is?

Was university what you expected?

8. Success

What do you consider “success” to be?

9. Probing questions

Other probing questions can include in relation to relevant responses:

Why do you think that is?

How did that make you feel?

What did that mean to you?

10. Conclusion

Is there anything more you wish to say? Anything important you think you have left out?